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A DIAGNOSTIC SCHERZO

*By*

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

MONKS ARE MONKS

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# MONKS

## ARE

# MONKS

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A DIAGNOSTIC SCHERZO

*By*

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

NEW YORK
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*To*

*Jeanne Natrilon*

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MONKS ARE MONKS

## CHAPTER I

GILBERT HEMINGHAM, like most fattish, socially impotent gentlemen slightly past forty and as children deprived of the advantages of a governess, was in the habit of discoursing frequently and not without obvious self-satisfaction on the length of his fibula. The topic seemed never to tire him; in fact, the length of his fibula appeared in his mind to be at one with his belief in his own superiority to the common run of his fellows and in its true mark of him as a sovereign animal. So far as the men with whom he came into contact were concerned, his boasting went for little. Men are accustomed to such gasconade and pay small attention to it, appreciating from privity that those who talk most about their fibulæ are actually runts, full of vainglory and eager to pass themselves off for what they are not. The authentic magnifico, he who is every inch a king, is silent upon such matters; he may well trust to others that which they may determine for themselves. It was the ladies that Hemingham and his pronunciamento embarrassed most greatly. For while the ladies, because of their natural curiosity in genealogical peacockery, are said

to be somewhat more deeply interested than men in such osseous tissue—in its relation to its possessor's standing and linear eminence—they yet deplored the times and occasions on which Hemingham saw fit to bring up the subject.

Hemingham's favorite forum in which to expatiate upon the splendors of his fibula happened to be the dinner table. Not any dinner table, however, for he had sufficient sagacity, even sufficient reserve, to pick the dinner tables which might, to his way of thinking, best and most impressedly receive his news. At home, at his own table, he no longer ventured to mention the topic. Had he done so, his wife, who had listened to his braggadocio, then more subtly conducted, during what seemed to her an unnecessarily prolonged courtship, during the brief honeymoon that came at last, and for weary, empty days thereafter, would, he well knew, have simply and quietly smiled him into an awkward and humiliated silence. They had been married for ten years and long, long since, for nine and a half years to be exact, neither Hemingham nor the theoretical magnificence of his fibula had made the slightest impression upon her. But there were other dinner tables at which the tidings of Hemingham's tibiofibular brio were more favorably received. At least that was Hemingham's apprehension. For Hemingham—the fact need no longer be concealed—was

an author of repute, of considerable notability proceeding from that repute, and of a more or less lionized existence because of both. It was his only misfortune, as it is the misfortune of all reputable authors, to be lionized by and at deplorably second-rate dinner tables. But it was his good fortune, as it is the good fortune, similarly, of all reputable authors, that the second-rate dinner tables of inferior people often have prettier or at least more agitating young women at them than the tables of the socially or intellectually elect.

It was at such dinner tables and with one such desirable companion at his right that Hemingham spread himself, with the pervasiveness of a fat lump of butter warming up to a dish of peas. Aware that at other dinner tables neither his fibula nor himself would distract attention from either his hosts' or his hosts' male guests wholly unwarranted but none the less complete conviction of their own superiority, he chose—largely of necessity—these more hospitable lyceums. It was not that he hadn't on several occasions practised his arts at loftier boards; he would, indeed, have preferred such more exclusive settings for a confidential demonstration of his virtuosities; but he had found, as has been hinted, that in such houses the authors of good books were regarded much in the light of intruders upon their own merit and celebrity, and as unnec-

essary as a mother, once her child has been born, regards its sire. In lesser houses and at the tables of less certain people whose lack of social and intellectual confidence was betrayed by the not unwelcome superiority of their dinners and wines, Hemingham and his ilk found the rewards that were denied them elsewhere. There, Hemingham was a somebody. The host or, more particularly, the hostess, basked in the glory of having captured him for an evening. The guests, mostly nondescript, hung upon his words. The daughter of the household craved his autograph. There was awesome whispering in the kitchen. No one was disturbingly noticing either of the circumstance that his dinner jacket shirt was of the kind that called for three buttons, or his conversation for many more.

It must not be imagined, however, that Gilbert Hemingham, fibula or no fibula, was not otherwise a man of parts. His novels were recognized by the critics as being among the finest that were being written in America in his time; his prose was at once prismatic and graceful, and often of an autumnal richness and beauty. In addition, he was himself a critic and commentator of some mark, although his critical prose was as a thing wholly distinct and apart from his fictional. Yet it, too, had its vitality and bounce. Appended, in example, are several selections from his admirable volume en-

titled "The Naphthalinic Profession," dedicated to a personable blonde:

## § 1

Much of the layman's distrust of criticism is to be accounted for by the distrust of criticism by critics themselves, so often frankly and substantiatingly voiced. Even the more intelligent and meritorious critics at times produce criticism so hollow and absurd that the least intelligent and least meritorious have no difficulty in detecting its nonsense and, one fears somewhat contumeliously, announcing it for all to hear. Under the circumstances it is not strange that the layman should grow skeptical of all criticism, just as he grows skeptical of all oysters if he happens to catch a single bad one.

## § 2

The extent to which laymen expect criticism to be infallible, thus raising the ante on the Lord Almighty Himself, is clearly perceived by critics when they happen occasionally to fall into blunder. Let a critic be exact in his facts for three hundred and sixty-four days and on the three hundred and sixty-fifth, due perhaps to a dose of defective wassail, slip ever so mildly and at once he is beset by

bushels of letters, countless sidewalk encounters and a terrific telephone din deriding and denouncing him for his break. In hardly another line of human activity is dead certainty expected of a man as it is in the field of critical enterprise. A tailor may periodically confect a pair of pants with a waistline that massages one's ears, a musician may now and then hit a note so sour that it gives the ear cholera morbus, a judge may at times hand down a decision that would disgrace a bush-league baseball umpire, and all that happens is a stray groan or cuss word. But let a critic inadvertently so much as assign an artist to the 1730's when he belongs in the 1740's and a gigantic heehawing and objurgation descend upon him. In this, of course, one detects a species of revenge on the part of the layman. Regarding even the most shy, modest and unassuming critic as a pompous know-it-all, the layman lies patiently in wait month upon month and year upon year for a chance to get a crack at him. And when that chance comes, as come it must soon or late in the case of any mortal whose profession is controversy, he lets fly at the momentarily aberrant critic with an unmistakable and toothsome rejoicing.

§ 3

To dismiss a critic as blasé is to be at one with the donkey. The best critics have been and are blasé men. The very circumstance of being blasé implies experience and experience, in turn, implies patience only with what is worthy and complete impatience and contempt for what is not. The blasé critic is one whose emotional equipment has been so toughened by concussion with tin-pan art that, unlike that of the still enthusiastic idiot, it responds alone to the finest form of stimulant. No critic in his first days is blasé. He is tickled by almost everything, and indiscriminately. No critic in his first days is worth a hoot. It is the critic who has a hard time keeping awake at the Metropolitan, at the theatre or in an art gallery that is the critic whose opinions are worth reading.

§ 4

It is an uncommon critic of literature or drama who does not, whatever the quality of an author's work, find himself ever so slightly drawn to and predisposed toward the author if the latter chances to select a theme and a viewpoint personally sympathetic to the critic. It thus comes about that

many an inferior work is hospitably treated by an otherwise sound critic who has not been able altogether to pull himself away from the author's coinciding point of view and to regard the work singly from an artistic level.

§ 5

There is a type of critic, currently promiscuous amongst us, whose chief delight lies in the isolation of various observations from their context, with the consequent natural implication that the author thereof is by way of being a doodle. One has only to pick up the nearest newspaper or literary review to see to what extent this species of criticism flourishes. It marks, of course, the pinnacle of critical nonsense, for there probably never lived an author who couldn't easily be made out a simpleton by the chicane. One can no more arbitrarily smouch a statement from its setting than one can genealogically smouch an egg from its hen. The critic who does so only proves himself a fool. Any ass can suggest that the man, say, who wrote "Human All-Too-Human" was a dunce by isolating from their respective contexts such statements as "Struggle against the truth as long as you can" or "I get a stiff neck in trying to discover whether I should start reading from this or that point."

§ 6

It is a characteristic mark of the lesser level of American criticism to boost potential and still struggling talent with all the gusto at its command and then, once that talent has come into its own and is sitting pretty on top of the fence, to give it a series of kicks *à l'improviste* in the abstracted rear. Nor is the upper level of our criticism entirely free from the same antic. What is at the bottom of it is unquestionably the very human, if proportionately uncritical, impulse to help the weak and hoot the strong, to do all we can for those who need us and to dislike, out of the fonts of vanity, those who are perfectly able to take care of themselves and who no longer have any practical use for us. Since the average critic amongst us is hard put to it to submerge his *alter ego* in his judgments and appraisals, since he is unable to dissociate his mind and emotions, we are constantly entertained by the monkey-shine to which I have alluded. When a young man of promise appears on the American scene the critics invariably start out like von Suppe's "Light Cavalry." But no sooner is the young man's promise actually realized than they take on the tone of Bizet's "Ivan the Terrible."

O'Neill is surely not the only writer in our midst

who has met with this species of criticism. In the beginning, his plays, full of promise but as yet immature, were greeted with a comprehensive and gala pounding upon drums, cymbals and neighborhood dishpans. The racket of endorsement was deafening, and out of all proportion to the subject of celebration. But when gradually his plays began to attain to genuine solidity, imagination and profundity, when gradually he began to settle himself squarely and securely at the very head of American dramatists, when finally he began to achieve the imprimatur of high critical praise from Europe—when this happened, the hitherto ecstatic local critical jazz and tzigane dancing stopped and in its stead the critical air became filled with Cherubini requiems, Liszt concertos pathétiques, Dvořák *opera* 89 and a whole chorus of Amnerises lifting up a despairful "Ohimè, morir mi sento." The same phenomenon has been observable in the cases of Sinclair Lewis and Cabell, as it was observable some years back in the cases of Dreiser and Victor Herbert. At the core of the nonsense, in addition to the point I have already mentioned, is doubtless the familiar critical passion to woo esteem for its independent and flexible judgment, which latter the school of criticism in question generally seeks to demonstrate by a sudden, surprising and intrinsically imbecile *volte face*, preceded by a certain

amount of coquettish controversial detouring and by facetious animadversions on the gluey quality of such more sober critics as prefer to keep themselves in the background by repeating honest, if repetitious and hence dull, estimates of the artist under discussion instead of trying to clown themselves into notoriety and the limelight.

## §7

The outstanding defect of literary criticism in America today is a confusion, on the part of a number of its professors, of the chameleon with catholicity. The practitioners of the art in considerable proportion believe that it is a mark of their open-mindedness and critical hospitality to change color every once in a while, and they negotiate the antic with a virtuosity that is exceeded only by an obvious arbitrariness. Any author, however bad, will soon or late share that hospitality if only he has patience. Virtues will in due time mechanically be read into him. The critics will essay to achieve for themselves a reputation for lack of prejudice and liberality by a whimsical digging for gold in his dross. Any number of these critics, who surely know better, have thus laboriously hornswoggled themselves into a detection of hypothetical merits in scores of such writers as Dr. Joseph Collins, Harold

Bell Wright, Katharine Newlin Burt, Hamilton Gibbs, Zane Grey, Henry Sydnor Harrison, Gertrude Atherton, *et al.*

§ 8

The word *vulgar*, appearing promiscuously in American criticism, is the emptiest word in the critical vocabulary. Indiscriminately and with a supercilious snout visited upon the writings of some of our best artists, its users betray simply their own shanty fastidiousness, to say nothing of their ignorance of the platitudinous fact that some of the grantedly greatest art that the world has known has been as vulgar as pigs' feet. What, may one ask, would these critics say today of an artist whose characters expectorated all over the place, talked of whores and intimate biological functions and discoursed on human sex indulgence in terms of animals; who treated of incest, named certain of his women characters after the social diseases and their consequences and descended to the lowest form of gutter speech; whose characters were christened after the more esoteric portions of the human anatomy and after the act of copulation, drank themselves into a state of stomach sickness, indulged in a prodigious belching, never failed to speak of disgusting odors, and swore like bohunks? That is,

conceiving a second coming, of an artist like Shakespeare?

* * * * *

In view of the persuasiveness and common-sense of Hemingham's defence of vulgarity, his own periodic vulgarity of expression must be condoned, aye, even applauded. There are writers, notably one or two of those who expound their views in such periodicals as, say, *The American Mercury*, who, while fastidious enough personally, are professionally vulgar merely for commercial purposes, who arbitrarily employ vulgarity to capture the mob's attention, much after the manner of hoochie-coochie dancers ballyhooing before what, when one pays out one's money and enters, is found to be nothing more than an innocuous and juvenile flea circus. But there are also writers like Hemingham who use vulgarity as painters sometimes use chrome yellow, legitimately and authentically to point an effect that could not be pointed without its superficially dubious but soundly integral employment, as Richard Strauss, further, uses discords or Stravinsky occasionally jazz. The worst that his critics could find to say of Hemingham in his rôle of critic was that where most critics wrote what they believed, Hemingham gave one the impression that he

first wrote a thing and didn't believe it until after he read what he had put down.

Hemingham was actually vulgar, in short, only in certain manifestations of his personal life. His vainglory in the matter of his fibula was but one of these manifestations. Among others were the obvious satisfaction he derived and the expansiveness he betrayed over the money his work had brought him, the air of warm camaraderie he displayed toward persons of whom he was envious, a somewhat leering intimacy, artfully concealed in an impersonal vocabulary, with young women whom he had but recently met, a wholesale enthusiasm, nervous of interrogation, for Marcel Proust, and the habit of promiscuous quotation of the Epicurean philosophy to the effect that virtue is only the wisdom which harmonizes passion with reason and pleasure with duty.

It was to Gilbert Hemingham's credit, however, that he selected his friends and acquaintances with such acumen, and with so shrewd an appreciation of their shortcomings in analogous directions, that they were oblivious of his deficiencies—including his fibula—and were happy to accept him at face value. That is, his male friends and acquaintances.

## CHAPTER II

UNDER the circumstances, therefore, it was unfortunate that Hemingham's predilections should be strongly in the feminine direction. For men, apart from what he could get out of them in a practical way, he had little esteem, only a forced, Ojibway geniality that was promptly withdrawn the moment they ventured to express the slightest skepticism as to his importance—, and not the slightest social interest. "Women," he quoted Nietzsche, "are the reward of the warrior." "Women," he liberally quoted Epicius, presiding genius of the Emperor Heliogabalus' cuisine, "are the *pâté de fois gras* of kings." "Women," he quoted himself, "are the roses on the neglected altar of the artist's heart." He was, indeed, more precise. "Women," he quoted himself, "are the Lawrenceana roses on the neglected altar of the artist's heart." As for his views of the male of the species, his work, translated into a half dozen languages, entitled "God In His Image," and extemporaneously dedicated to a young brunette whom he had encountered in his publisher's office on the morning he had delivered the manuscript, gives a sufficient

inkling. It is necessary to transcribe but two paragraphs; they illustrate the color of the whole:

§ 1

That man, due to his sound critical observation, hasn't the respect and sympathy for his fellow man that he has for a common dog is demonstrated by his reaction to a casualty that frequently befalls each of them. When a man is struck down on the street by an automobile or a taxicab, the man on the curb is startled, shocked and horrified, and there his emotions stop. But when a dog is struck down, his heart is the first thing in him to respond with pity, tenderness and sympathy. A man run down and killed does not evoke in the breast of his average fellow man half the genuine distress and half the real sadness that a dog does when, under the same circumstances, it merely suffers a broken leg.

§ 2

Consider man's pleasures. Soon after coming into the world he gleefully shakes a little tin ball with birdshot in it. A little later on he pulls a string which makes a small wooden figure kick up its legs and wiggle its arms. A bit later he takes a small round clay ball in his thumb and forefinger and

shoots it at several other small round clay balls. Presently he sits on a wooden horse and rides around rapidly in a circle to the tune of a barrel-organ until he is dizzy. A few years later he begins to hit at a round leather ball with a stick and, when successful in hitting it, drops the stick and starts running around the lot, touching several sacks of cornmeal on the way. Then, night falling, he puts a stiff piece of white linen against his chest, props up his neck with another piece of stiff white linen, stands face to face with a girl and synchronously shakes his hips and feet with her while several men blow horns and beat upon tightly stretched membrane. Growing older he sits at a table with several other men and spends hours passing around small pieces of cardboard with red and black spots on them. Occasionally he will go out to a converted cow-pasture and hit a little white ball with several different kinds of sticks, uttering happy cries when the little ball falls into a hole in the ground. Coming into old age and preparing to leave the world, he sits at a table with another old man and moves small round pieces of wood across a board marked with little squares. . . .

* * * * *

But for the ladies Hemingham had not only an eye, but a soul, a heart, an admiration, a taste, an

enthusiasm, a desire, a regard, a curiosity, a relish, a mind, a partiality, a benevolence, a hankering, a yearning and an aspiration. In the company of one of them, he expanded and glowed. The three opals on his evening shirt acquired a new brilliance and fire in her presence. With the ladies, he was in his element. His wife? No, it wasn't that she didn't understand him, he said; she did, dear creature of whom he was very fond; it was simply that an artist needed beautiful women in his life; an artist was not like other men; beautiful women were at once his inspiration, his challenge and his satisfaction. To himself he permitted this esoteric meditation and apologia:

"It is possible that a man may love only one woman in his life. So, for that matter, is it equally possible that a man may get through life with only one pair of trousers. The possibility is hardly open to question, but the probability one fears, particularly in the case of an artist like myself, is remote. It is quite possible that a man may remain physically loyal to one woman throughout his life, but it is extremely improbable that he can remain always mentally and emotionally loyal to her. A man's taste in women changes with the passing of time as inevitably as does his taste in literature and neckties. The man who whispers into the ear of a sweet one that she is the only woman he will ever have a

penchant for is, accordingly, one of three sorts: a deliberate fraud and liar; an unconscious fraud and liar; or, finally, a man over sixty who, at once deliberately and unconsciously, is telling the melancholy truth.

"There are perhaps young men in the twenties who fall in love, as the phrase is, marry the refreshment of their choice, and live with her in peace and comfort until the embalmer enters upon the scene. And so, too, are there perhaps older men who negotiate the same feat. But the mere fact that they spend their lives with one woman and are biologically faithful to her and are relatively content with their lot does not mean—as anyone knows whose eye is gifted in the penetration of externals—that their taste does not occasionally and refractorily wander to some other woman. The wandering of fancy—I will have to admit this much—may be perfectly innocent and eminently moral, but it is there in the backs of their heads none the less and, being there, it offers proof of the theory that though a man may conceivably be a saint in the matter of monogamous uprightness, his taste often resides in a harem.

"A man's taste in the fair sex nine times out of ten changes every so often with what is sometimes, even to him, an alarming suddenness. The girl a man of twenty-one admires usually seems to him,

in the retrospect of forty, to have been a gimcrack of pretty low grade. If he has married her at twenty-one, true enough, he often doesn't so regard her as the years chase each other down the corridor of the late thirties and middle forties, but that proves nothing. It simply proves that marriage has warped his honest critical talents, has caused him to suspend judgment for the sake of his own vanity and self-esteem, and has made him bury his head in the sand in order to deceive himself that no brilliant caravan ever crosses the desert. But I doubt that one can find a single unmarried man—or, for that matter, married man, provided he has married the girl in question and will tell the truth—who would confess that the girl he fancied in his younger years is exactly the sort of pea-chick he would fancy today, that she is his ideal in every respect, and that it is inconceivable that he could have eyes, ears and aesthetic taste for any other.

"A man is not a single, definite, fixed creature all his life: he is a dozen different creatures. He is no more the same man at forty that he was at twenty or thirty than he is the same at sixty he was at forty or fifty. I will admit exceptions, of course; there are a few men who punch the emotional time-clock relatively early in life and stick obediently to the same job until they are carted away to the glue-works. But the average man—and the artist much

more so—changes periodically as certainly as the weather changes, even in California. He may always vote the straight Republican ticket; he may always eat an apple before he goes to bed; he may always smoke just so many cigars a day and no more; but his views of women alter every so often. The man who marries in his forties, let us say, thus marries that woman in whom he finds less to laugh at derisorily than in any of the women he has previously known. This diminution of objections to her is what captivates and hamstrings him, and is what our friends, the poets, call love. It is actually less love, in the commonly accepted sense of the word, than it is the man's respect for his improved intelligence in taste. The lad of twenty who jumps to the nearest minister and gets himself married offers his wife the dubious tribute of an amateur taste. He is like a small boy who has learned how to turn a somersault and who confidently offers himself as a professional partner to a star circus acrobat. But the man of maturer years who takes unto his bosom a wife offers her the high compliment of a post-graduate taste and emotion.

"Although a suspicion of superficiality, smartness and lack of sound sense always hovers over epigrammatic expression—for what good reason I have never been able to make out—it seems to me (I recall that I once encountered the idea in some book

or other) that the woman an adult man marries is generally a compromise with the illusion of his first sweetheart. That is to say that while the man would not have married his first sweetheart on a wager and while he knows full well that she had as many faults as a second-hand toothbrush, he yet hocus-pocuses her into a romantic legend to fill the actual lack of romance in his life and embodies that legend, in so far as he is able to, in the person of the woman he marries in later years. There is no contradiction here. For though a man's taste in women changes, he often likes to flatter his romantic donkeyishness that it doesn't change—that, in other words, his ideal in women is still the young, wide-eyed girl in gingham who used to throw her broad straw bonnet with the sunflower on it over her shoulder and swing on the garden gate.

"For every man who succumbs to the charms of a girl early in life and devotes the rest of his life to admiring her charms and those of no other girl, there are a thousand whose eyes rove hither and thither during their days on earth. In this polygamy of taste lies, indeed, man's, and particularly the artist's, tribute to the fair sex."

But though there was little doubt of Hemingham's polygamy of taste, there was considerable as to its age-limit. While any woman at all personable who would listen to his testimonial to his fibula and

show signs of sharing even a theoretical interest in it fell readily within the catalogue of that taste, his choice, whenever possible, was for noticeably young women. Young women, he found, were more greatly impressed by his literary reputation, and his literary reputation was a matter of overwhelming pride and satisfaction to him. Beside it, indeed, in his own estimation, even his fibula shrank. A young woman was, in a word, Hemingham's oyster. She substantiated in him the sense of his own vast importance; she ignited his imagination; he basked in the warmth of his own presence; his fancy played, with the persistence of the G major tonality of that scherzo of Tschaikovsky's, upon himself as an amalgam of the Knight of Raphael, the Knight of the Swan and even the Knight of the Burning Pestle;—and his hands played also. There was that about Hemingham's hands in the presence of a young woman which there is about a dull caller in the presence of the family dog. A young woman's upper arm was to him not the anterior extremity from the shoulder-joint to the elbow, represented by the extent of the humerus—the brachium as distinguished from the forearm or antebrachium; it was something designed primarily for stroking, patting, petting and pinching. Three minutes after a young woman met him for the first time, her arm was already in the possession of a masseur.

It must not be thought, however, that Hemingham proceeded to this amorous osteopathy *virtute securus*. He had what might be called a technique, a technique quite his own, the purpose of which was to conceal his manual familiarity not only from the direct consciousness of its recipient, but from the consciousness of his own Lotharioan inferiority as well, in a counterpoint of the species of dissertation expected of him. Like a photographer who seeks to distract a child from self-consciousness by making a noise like a bird, Hemingham sought to distract a young woman from the operations of his hand by making a noise like a literary man. While his hand was substituting for himself as a Don Juan, one might hear him discourse upon the young intellectuals, upon the decline of the detective story, upon the revolt of the college boys, upon a variety of topics designed to impress his *vis-à-vis* with his absorption in matters more lofty than manuary exploration.

Thus, while his hand was using a young woman's arm as a razor-strop, he would, with a fine air of impersonality, oracularize so:

"I am informed that this year marks the tenth anniversary of the appearance in our midst of that particular group of girls and boys whom one thinks of when the label, 'the young intellectuals,' is mentioned. In the group there are approximately a

dozen young men and two or three young women, some of them not so very vernal at that. Let me celebrate the great occasion by considering what they have represented and what they have accomplished.

"Two—it will be unnecessary to name names, since all of them are only too readily identified—have written verse without capital letters, punctuation and rhyme. Four have written plays that essayed to break down dramatic and theatrical traditions and that have been found to be stabs at an ill-assimilated Expressionism, signifying nothing but their authors' complete incomprehension of dramaturgy. One has confected verse that consists of one or two word lines and of endless word repetitions. One has written a book proclaiming Charlie Chaplin, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Paul Whiteman and several music show clowns great geniuses. Another has written a book declaring that the only true artists in America are Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore and E. E. Cummings. One has written a series of essays on the relation of metaphysics to skyscrapers, the Ford automobile, the hot-dog and other such great American wonders. One has written a novel in jazz-band form, and another a novel whose claim to fame rests in the printing of a word hitherto more intimately associated with latrines than with literature. One has com-

posed a symphony in which wash-boilers, vacuum cleaners, hand-pumps and airplane propellers figure. One has written a novel about the younger generation in which a flapper loudly declares her intention of becoming an illicit mother, and another a novel in which there are six goddams to a page and at least three Jesuses. One has written two good short stories."

Again, his discourse would take some such turn as this:

"The good old detective story of the past appears to have fallen on evil days. What is more, it seems to have vanished from the scene almost entirely. What pass today for detective stories are such only in name; gone from them are the old open-and-shut integrity, the old straightforwardness, the old honesty. The stories we get nowadays are less detective yarns than tournaments in psychology, electrical engineering, parlor legerdemain, pharmacopeia, jitney science and epigram. They are the work, very largely, of essayists and novelists who feel like taking a week off from their regular labors and playing around in the field of mystery fiction for a bit of sport. In the place of Gaboriau and Conan Doyle, we now have Chesterton and Belloc. In place of the old Lecoqs and Sherlocks and Lupins, we now have a troupe of priests, inventors, spirit mediums, offspring of women who were scared by bloodhounds

while *enceinte*, sagacious butlers, laboratory professors, chemical experts, clairvoyants, psychoanalysts and God knows what else. And, coincidentally, we have treatises on politics, economics, scientific themes, Long Island society, bootlegging and all other such things with a detective and a mystery arbitrarily inserted into them. The old detective was, first and foremost, a detective. The detective of the present fiction is a student of Freud, a gynecologist, a lawyer, a bacteriologist, an etomologist, a professor of calculus or a dilettante behaviorist. Scotland Yard has given way to Harvard Yard."

Or again, some such as this:

"The landscape currently provides no more amusing spectacle than the latter-day violent self-conversion of so many of the undergraduates at our institutions of learning into fledgling iconoclasts and no-men. It was just about ten years ago that the seismic disturbance hit the colleges, upset a lot of hitherto well-balanced kids and set them to leave off studying and to devote themselves instead to loud and dismaying vituperations of their teachers, derisory yowls at religion, morality and the novels of William Dean Howells, and elaborate nose-fingerings at society in general, democracy in particular, and boys who wasted their time playing football.

"In every college there has come into existence a

body of these adolescent philosophical bromo-seltzers, each foaming and sizzling with a zeal to cure the college and the cosmos of a presumably fearsome hangover. They perform editorially in the college papers, vocally on the campuses and fistically in the adjacent dog-wagons, haranguing their more peaceable and indifferent classmates like so many Paul Reveres determined to wake up a world to the awful calamity that threatens it. Well, let one who understands and likes them not appear to be ridiculing them; there is something to be said for any boy who wants to think for himself, however whimsical the brews of that thought turn out to be. But, with all the sympathy and affection in the world, one can't help smile ever so gently at them, for their fulminations and controversial alarms are to the colleges much what spitballs are to the grammar schools, and, while equally diverting, are hardly more lethal. They are on the right track, these lads, but so, often, are little handcars. They are Voltairean rebels and revolutionists not so much for a cause as for the satisfaction they derive from showing off in a different and striking uniform. Their signatures may be original, but the packages they adorn are bootleg. Their opinions may be sound, as a borrowed dollar may not be counterfeit, but a bogus air attaches to the mouthpieces. The national bird of

their youthful America is not the eagle, but the cuckoo.

"I have followed closely and sympathetically these collegiate Indian wars since first they got under way, and I have yet to hear of a single boy who has produced amid all the racket a single rational, practicable, original yell. Some have manufactured interesting noises, others have even made themselves felt momentarily by their classmates and instructors, but none of them has done much more than to deal at second-hand in the opinions of certain of their more nonchalant and unexcitable elders. It would, I believe, be much better for them to let off the steam of youth in baseball, football and cutie rendezvous than in these futile caboose bouncings. There will be plenty of time for them to get indignant as hell later on."

Meanwhile, the hand performed now *arco*, now *pizzicato*, upon the credulous A string, the frail E string and the gullible D string of his fair auditor's epicondyle. But, though he had massaged hundreds of young women, to say nothing of a sufficient number of older girls when young were not available, there had been none whose humeral perquisites so fascinated him and so toyed with his imagination as those of Miss Lorinda Hope.

## CHAPTER III

THE truth was that Lorinda Hope was tired of being a virgin. The lamentable fact might be expressed somewhat more delicately, with a consequent diminution of shock to the sensibilities of the more punctilious reader, but the fact, sad as it is, would remain. For example, it might be said that Miss Hope, now in her twenty-fifth year, had wearied of celibacy, or that she had found in pucelage not the fullest expression of her potentialities, or that she no longer viewed spinsterhood with an anatomical calm. But through the periphrasis the simple circumstance that she was tired of being a virgin would unmistakably reveal itself. "Philosophers," Miss Hope had meditated, and not without a degree of both profundity and self-satisfaction, "since the beginning of time have tried assiduously to think sex into an inferior place in life. But they have succeeded in doing so only philosophically." Wisdom, Miss Hope had also concluded, lies not so much in acquiring as in forgetting. The wise person is simply the one who has dismissed from his mind most of the beliefs that he started out in life with and that the majority of his fellow-men still

believe. And one of the beliefs that she had now dismissed, thus augmenting her store of wisdom, was the importance which Sunday School teachers and English dramatists attach to feminine chastity.

But she was, for all her decision, of a highly particular and even précieuse disposition as to the potential villain. Of a nature that tended toward the romantic and of a mind, for all her unusual Cazin-like comeliness, that was slyly alert and not without its facets, as may conceivably be appreciated from her deliberations, she had resolved that the ultimate marauder of her charms must be a writer. And not merely a writer, but one of sufficient merit, eminence and acclaim to invest her downfall with a measure of aplomb, dignity and glamour. It was the tragedy of all women, she told herself, that the first man they surrendered to was pretty generally of the sort that in the reflection of later years dismayed their sense of aesthetics, and she was not going to be one like them. Matrimony was not in her mind—one may as well be quite frank about the young lady. It was not that she had evolved any set philosophy or prejudice in the matter; it was simply that, for the time being at least, marriage did not appeal to her. "Among all the married couples I know—and I know many," she would say, "there isn't one that doesn't warn me against marriage. Why, I don't know, for some of them seem happy

and contented with their lot. Yet even these tell me that I am better off as I am. I often think it over and speculate as to what it is in marriage that causes these friends and counsellors to impart the advice that they do. I have asked them, but they will not tell me in so many plain words. They simply say, 'Don't do it—that's all!', and let it go at that."

She was not cheaply cynical; she was in no sense an advocate, either for herself or for others, of what is called, foolishly, free love. Her views in that direction she expressed very bluntly. "Those persons," she said, "who hold against marriage the circumstance that, under the changes which have come about in modern civilization, it doesn't last, that is, that the parties to it tire of the relationship and break up, seem to overlook the fact that the same thing happens between men and women where there is no marriage. I venture to guess that statistics would show that the average marriage lasts just as long and just as comfortably as the average free-love affair. The trouble with all these commentators on marriage lies in their faulty premiss that it logically should and ought to last indefinitely. The premiss is a charming one, but unfortunately it is also an imperfect one. It is corrupted by sentimentality. If the average marriage of sensitive and imaginative persons is a failure because it lasts only five or six years, all that I can say is that the average

unsanctified love affair of equally sensitive and imaginative persons is a much greater failure, because it usually blows up long before that time."

It was simply that she had made up her mind, without philosophic thought of the future the one way or the other, to get a bit of piquancy out of life on the wing, and to get it from and with one who might linger charmingly and importantly in her memory in the perhaps humdrum years to come. There was nothing of the Euphorion in Texas note in her decision; far from it. The consequences of that boll-weevil romance struck her, indeed, as unlovely and offensively immoral. What she sought was merely what all young women seek in one romantic direction or another and sometimes have not the courage to seize when it is offered to them.

Lorinda's difficulty, until now, was that the men she had known were largely of the good-looking, well-bred, ritualistically minded and nonentity species that made not the slightest appeal to her imagination, either metaphysical or physical. They were of the sort that, were she to have surrendered her virtue to one of them, would have immediately made her feel like a promiscuous woman. They were just men, rubber-stamps: the kind that no husband of any sensitiveness can ever forgive to himself in his wife's past. The epiphany of Hemingham was accordingly a red-letter moment. She

might, true enough, have wished for a somewhat more ornamental invader of her vestal shrine, at least one not quite so rotund, but here at any rate was a somebody. "The affair of the average woman and the average man," she ruminated, "is so singly anatomical, without anything to augment its excitement. But an affair with a man like Gilbert Hemingham would simultaneously involve not only physiology, but philosophy, literature, the arts, the usufructs of celebrity and what not else."

Lorinda, as the more literary reader will doubtless ere this have perceived, was, at least to herself, no "Sordello"; she had just one meaning, and it was not obscure. To others, she was gifted with the ability to present, when she so willed, a puzzlingly inaccurate and inscrutable personality—indeed, a variety of fictitious personalities—but she knew herself as realistically as a surgeon. She often smiled to herself at others' appraisals and estimates of her. It was so easy, she found, to make anyone believe of you what you wished them to. She saw herself as a prestidigitator, with herself as the black velvet curtain behind which she could hide her true self when she so desired, as the bowl of gleaming goldfish to bring suddenly and surprisingly to light, as the treasure chest with the false bottom. But in place of black velvet, goldfish and like instruments of the prestidigitator's craft, she preferred to employ such

very much more certain, effective and impenetrable devices of personal necromancy as a narcotic droop of her very lovely eyes, a pretended understanding of what she did not know and a pretended complete incomprehension of what she did, an oblique and half-swallowed wit (shrewdly reserved for only witty men), a manner that, for all her possible mood of Hegesiasan pessimism, invariably suggested a soft warm mist, and the general air of remoteness and inaccessibility associated in the minds of bald-headed men with stage actresses and in those of democrats with duchesses.

To have looked at Lorinda's ankles, if one were not aware that beautiful young women are generally more intelligent than their less fortunate sisters, one would have distrusted her head. It was therefore with an ineffectually concealed but understandable surprise that the always meticulously polite late Mr. Chauncey Depew, meeting and conversing with her at a small supper party, had at length observed to her, "My dear Miss Hope, I know that you will forgive me, but our mutual acquaintance, Miss Genevieve Ross, whose latest book I have found so amusing, told me that you were anything but—shall I say bright?—and I find you very much so. She said that when she met you, you said nothing and seemed actually dumb. How am I to account for that?" To which Lorinda had made gentle an-

swer, "Genevieve Ross is a very witty woman, and can you imagine anything more awful than two very witty women in the same room?" Whereupon, as was her wont when she had permitted any such sauceful remark to escape her lips, she promptly reverted to Rôle No. 2B, to wit, that of the lovely vacuum, which she had found was as irresistible to intelligent men as it was uncongenial to stupid.

The dinner table at which Lorinda met Gilbert Hemingham was hardly the kind that she fancied, but she appreciated, as has already been hinted, that if one wished to meet the better authors one could not be too finical about one's hosts. She would have preferred to meet her great man and potential Julien, her Rudolphe, amid people more socially decorative and hence less distracting. The couples at this sort of table, it occurred to her, were invariably more interested in the other couples than in themselves. They had all the offensive curiosity that goes with respectability. And as she wished to have Hemingham quite to herself, the prospect was none too satisfactory. In addition, the background provided by the dining-room itself would, she felt, be disturbing to Hemingham's fastidious taste as it had been revealed to her in his novels. It would in all probability induce an irritability in him and direct his conversation into alien and unwelcome chan-

nels when there was but one into which she hoped it might be directed.

But with Hemingham's very first words, she was reassured.

"You are, my dear," said the great man, "very beautiful. You are like a rose. A Lawrenceana rose. Why haven't you gone into the moving pictures?"

Lorinda, without further doubt or ado, put her technique into action. She dropped her Colorado claro eyes and said nothing.

"I don't blame you," promptly proceeded her companion. "Every once in a while, though at sufficiently handsome intervals, I escort myself to a movie salon to observe the tremendous strides that the movies have made in the meantime, according to the pieces in the papers. Several months ago, in pursuit of the necessary education, I attended the showing of a film that was announced to be one of the screen's latest and most extraordinary gems. One of the big scenes showed a character caught in a Klondike storm and slowly freezing to death. Up to the very last moment of his complete congealment, with his feet, legs, arms, hands, torso, neck and ears already so much ice-cream, the actor retained a perfect and elaborate pantomimic control of his face. Now I can take another long holiday."

He inhaled briefly. "And as for the talkies, they have done nothing so far but cuckoo a lot of stale

and rubbishy plays, some of them fifteen and twenty years old, or have shown original stuff so bad that any adult caught in one of the tripe-traps has been suffocated by the stupidity. But, it is said, even though this be admitted, there will yet develop in time playwrights who will write original plays for the talkies that will convert them into something worth-while. The same thing, let us remember, was said about the silent movies—and look at the damned things! The talkies, it is reasonable to assume, will go along exactly as the silent movies did. One out of every five hundred of them, like one out of every five hundred movies, may conceivably have some fairly intelligent stuff in it. But if it does it will fail as surely as the fairly intelligent movie has failed in the past. What will happen in the case of the talkies is a lot of fancy rhetoric on the part of the entrepreneurs for a year or so, and then good old Hollywood will again loosen its belt, undo its collar, get back to nature and open up the old slop sluice-gates.

"The talkies are confronted with a much harder problem than the silent movies. The latter, for all the censors, could get away with murder in a dozen directions where the talkies will be able to do nothing of the kind. The censors have permited any number of things to be shown where they will refuse to permit them to be spoken of. Clara Bow has

been freely allowed to display her anatomy for the incalescence of sailors, to the great profit of the eminent Messrs. Zukor and Lasky, but the moment Clara opens her mouth and says "Come on, boys, get a load of this!" the censors will hop on her and the eminent Messrs. Zukor and Lasky will be out money. In the silent movies, Charles Farrell is permitted to swim up to Mary Duncan without any clothes on, Alice White is permitted to appear stark naked and be chased by Jack Mulhall, Greta Garbo is allowed to be smeared with the amorous saliva of John Gilbert and Vilma Banky is allowed a pleasant seduction by Walter Byron, but the second the boys articulate what is in their minds or the second the girls answer the rascals the one way or the other, such censorship boards as will not permit even the picture of a woman sewing on baby clothes may surely not be expected to do any enthusiastic applauding.

"The silent movies, with very few exceptions in the last three or four years, have prospered most greatly from the display of sex garbage. The talkies, without this sex garbage, after their novelty has worn off, will have a difficult time of it. The statistics show clearly that the movie public, save for an occasional airplane or seltzer-siphon picture, wants to spend its money on stories dealing with fornication either contemplated or achieved. You hear, from the counsel for the defence, that this is un-

true: that Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and other such stars turn out non-aphrodisiacal pictures and make fortunes. But Charlie Chaplin turns out only one picture a year at the very most; Fairbanks' latest picture to be counted up was not a great success; and Mary Pickford, after a long period of innocent pouting, has now been driven to do a picture the story of which at least dallies with the idea of a seduction. The biggest laugh in even 'The Big Parade' was got by a dirty crack; 'Variety,' for all the gabble about Jannings' miming, had a hot rape scene; 'Sunrise' and 'Four Devils' also had their full share of biological arson; and you'll have a job finding even a Western without its scene in which the actor with the black moustache lasciviously grabs the blonde.

"The movies, as a matter of fact, have since the very beginning cultivated the rabble's half dollars and dollars with sex fireworks. Go back to the old Griffith pictures and you'll discover them to have been seldom without attempted rape or illegitimate babies. 'The Birth of a Nation's' big climax had nothing to do with Abe Lincoln or the Civil War but consisted in the villain's locking the door on a girl and attempting an assault upon her. There will, of course, be talkies that will make an heroically discreet stab at eliminating sex stuff but, after the novelty of the talkie has passed, they will, except in

isolated instances, undoubtedly lose their shirts. No talkie will ever dare or be permitted to go one-hundredth so far as the theatre is freely permitted to go. And a movie public that for thirteen years has consistently made the purveyors of screen sex rich will hardly be converted suddenly into a public that craves Salvation Army films. For a while, as I've said, that public will get a kick from hearing its favorite dummies speak, but it will not be long before it will yearn again for the days when, censorship or no censorship, it could work itself up over the French post-card insinuations of Hungarian, Mexican and Scandinavian houris stretched out languorously on sofas, of Brooklyn and Flatbush ex-stenographers coyly showing their backsides and of side-burned former counter-jumpers lighting the incense in their million dollar Louvre bachelor apartments and licking their chops over the imminent prospect of bolting the door on one of the Talmadges."

Lorinda bestowed upon Hemingham one of her famous glances, which he was not above accepting as a salute to his conversational gifts.

"It is a great pleasure to know you, my dear," he went on, adopting his more literary air. "You are intelligent. Hence neither would the stage be a suitable place for you. Consider the so-called intelligence of actors. I say so-called because the

intelligence in point is actually very little of the sort but simply rather an assertive repudiation of the general mummer ignorance which, while sufficiently and convincingly repudiatory, substitutes nothing for the ignorance save an arbitrary and freakish mental posturing. The really intelligent actor, assuming that he exists, is merely one who has sense and discretion enough not to interpose his own mind between the dramatist and the audience and who reads his lines as the dramatist plainly meant them to be read."

Lorinda became worried. Was this sort of talk to keep up? Therefore she said, very prettily, "Oh please don't stop, Mr. Hemingham!"

"No, enough of that," he objected, to Lorinda's fluttering relief. "What interests me most greatly at the moment is censorship."

Lorinda's heart sank.

"Are you interested in censorship, my dear?" he asked.

"Terribly," answered Lorinda.

Whereupon, Hemingham began:

"Since all the railing at censorship, whether on the part of intelligent men or the gaseous gentry, doesn't seem to have accomplished anything, it may be a good idea to look at the situation as it still stands and to attempt a suggestion that may, perhaps, have a bit of practicability to it. One thing,

at the outset, appears to be certain, and that is that we are as bound to have censorship in one form or another as we are to have Socialists and fleas, that we may as well face the fact and, facing it, see what we can best do about it. Censorship, whether external or self-imposed, has been in evidence since the grandson of the first Yahoo momentarily left off pulling his squaw around by the hair in order to hew the picture of a bird in the hillside rock, and it will doubtless persist until the earth disintegrates into its original constituent chemicals. If an Anthony Comstock objected to the anatomical indelicacy of the 'September Morn' chromo, the Romans objected no less to a certain biological realism in sculpture and, by force of their paleo-puritanical opinion, brought the greatest sculptors so to figleaf or to astringe the physiological emblem of Siva as to cause a gaping perplexity among hordes of future Cook's tourists.

"Censorship is found to have been and to be not peculiar to a certain time and a certain people; in this way or in that it has exercised itself to its own odd end the world over century upon century. An outline of the history of censorship by one of our Wellses, Van Loons, Durants or some other such chauffeur of data would bring considerable embarrassment to all the Greenwich Village rebels who currently single out the Sumners and Fords of the

Republic for their especial catcalls and derisions, for the world has never been without its Sumners and Fords and its Comstocks and the fact remains that neither ridicule nor the courts of law have effectively succeeded in ridding the scene of them and of their opprobrious monkeyshines. At one time they have taken one shape, at another time some other, but they and the doctrines they stand for have none the less been unmistakably in evidence. Censorship drove Aeschylus from Athens to spend his last remaining days in Sicily. It was censorship, after the introduction of Christianity into Europe in the Middle Ages, that caused the setting aside of Greek and Roman plays, partly—I quote Schlegel—because the moralists observed them to have 'reference to heathen ideas and partly because they had degenerated into the most shameless immorality.' Philosophy and politics, suffering the stings of censorship, have seen the undoing of Socrates, 'the corrupter of youth,' the excommunication of Spinoza, the imprisonment of Voltaire, 'the poisoner of youth,' and the kicking of a Scott Nearing out of the University of Pennsylvania. Literature, goosed by censorship, has witnessed the squirmings and jumpings of Swifts and Zolas, Byrons and Whitmans, Smolletts and Balzacs. Music, horned into by censorship, has seen its waltz time banned by the Methodist Church and its Wagnerian treasures

barred for several years from American opera houses. Sculpture has been censored from the American chautauquas and from American public squares and drinking fountains, terpsichore in one of its phases has been censored off the stages of France, and everything from 'Androcles and the Lion' to 'Gentlemen Prefer Blondes' has been censored in whole or in part from British platforms and book-stalls.

"Censorship, we find, is as deeply rooted in human social pathology and as deplorably unavoidable as endoenteritis. If the America of the moment is caught in its grip, so, too, are the England and the Germany, the Italy and the Russia and the France. If Ellis and Bourdet are attacked by the current mudlarks in America, Ellis and Bourdet suffer much the same attack in England. If Cabell is attacked here, Marguéritte is attacked in France. If Schnitzler is on occasion banned here, so also is he banned in Austria and Germany. If it is forbidden to play the Black Bottom in certain American locâles, so is it also forbidden in Italy. If Emma Goldman's views are offensive to the United States and she is because of them barred out of the country, we may speculate as to how many gala cocktail parties Mr. J. P. Morgan would be tendered were he to visit Russia.

"But I wander from the point. Leaving censor-

ship in its general aspect to the care of others, I bring myself back to a consideration of it as it has to do in America with the arts alone. Granting that we can't get rid of the nuisance altogether, what, then, is the most workable scheme that we can evoke to handle it, at least in a measure,—a scheme that may possibly be satisfactory to both sides? Since arguments pro and con have got us nowhere—and by us I mean the smutsers on the one hand and the liberals on the other—since the nose-fingerings on both sides have accomplished nothing but hard feelings and some snappy *mots*, I propose a way out of the *impasse* by suggesting a slight and very simple alteration in the present statute. As the law now reads, it's one-sided and unfair; the artists get the dirty end of the stick. They are condemned not *after* the commission of a misdemeanor or crime, but *before* it, and, what is more, for a misdemeanor or crime that is purely hypothetical. To condemn a man for corrupting morals without actual proof that the morals of a single person have been corrupted is to sentence a man for arson because he is caught carrying a match. Yet that's exactly the situation that confronts the littérateur in America at this moment. He is prosecuted on and convicted of the charge of inciting lewd and lascivious thoughts in purely theoretical crania and of corrupting the morals of purely imaginary young folk. If

he were to be haled into court for having written a book on safe-cracking and were thereupon to be sentenced to Danemora as the potential accomplice of the next yegg to crack a safe, the picture wouldn't be more ridiculous. As with all other criminals, the littérateur should be properly tried and convicted upon the evidence and the evidence alone. Today, he is tried and convicted by *gratis dictum*. If 'Jurgen' has actually filled someone's head with dirty thoughts and impaired someone's morals, let's have the witness in the box and let him swear on the Bible to his ruin. Then let Cabell be put in stripes and lodged on the stone-pile if need be. If Mr. Justice Ford's daughter has been contaminated by reading Dreiser or any other such literary devil, let her papa put her on the stand and let's all have a look, and then, if we blush, let Theodore be put on the first New York Central express to Ossining.

"Deponent, being a drinking and hence more or less reputable Christian, not knowing, he can't say whether girls are or are not ruined by reading a book, but if they are let's have them testify openly to the sad fact and then let the law deal with the guilty gent. If a play corrupts the public morals, let's have some fair, open testimony on the point—a single high-school girl, if she's moderately comely, will do. Let's have at least *one plain fact*. It is unfair to prosecute or convict a man for theoretical

malfeasance. He at least has a right to be convicted on circumstantial evidence, and even such evidence is presently not offered against the artist. If he is a corrupter of decency he has a right to see and to hear his victim. Arbitrarily to assert, as the ordinance now asserts, that he is guilty of a criminal act *in vacuo* is like sending to the electric chair every man with murder in his heart. The hope of an intelligent and decent peace between the moralist and artist camps lies in the just and honorable recasting of a presently unjust, unfounded and highly equivocal statute."

If, at that moment, Lorinda had not felt Hemingham's hand on her knee, she would have screamed.

## CHAPTER IV

LORINDA HOPE was not a bad young woman; it was just that she had an apartment of her own. And it was there, in the gray chiffon of the following afternoon's twilight, that Hemingham came, at her realistically coy invitation, to tea.

"What a relief to be here alone with you, my dear," he announced upon his arrival, and Lorinda's heart jumped like a puppy at a sweet cracker.

"Why do you say that?" she asked, with an archness that concealed, not without difficulty, her dawning confidence in the outcome of things.

"Because, my Lawrenceana rose," said Hemingham—and Lorinda dropped those Palma Vecchio eyes and breathed with a hushed quickness, "because of the good taste you have shown in the decoration of this apartment. When one enters the house or apartment of the average well-to-do American man or woman one is unable to tell from one's surroundings whether one is in the house or apartment of an Englishman, Frenchman, Spaniard, Italian or Russian. It is the aim of every American who owns as much as two shares of General Motors to make the inside of his house look as un-American

as possible. With the help of a fifty-cent illustrated magazine or a five thousand dollar interior decorator, depending upon the state of his purse, he sets about sedulously deleting from it every vestige of Americanism and garnishing it instead with absurd alien embellishments. Ransacking auction sales and imitation antique factories, he goes in for Louis XV bedrooms, Renaissance dining-rooms, Georgian libraries and Graeco-Roman lavatories, with sideflings at Louis XIV drawing-rooms, Turkish dens and Spanish vestibules. Russian candlesticks, Hepplewhite commodes, Greek urns, Persian prayer-rugs, Wedgewood ash-trays, duplicates of Du Barry's bed and Henry VIII's clothes-tree, imitation Flemish tapestries, Chinese lamps, Japanese screens, Benedictine refectory tables, statues of Buddha, Delft friezes and German beer *Seidel* regale the visiting eye and, save for an occasional spittoon and such times as a parade goes by and *paterfamilias* puts out a flag, it would take a Dupin, suddenly released from blindfold, to guess where he was at. The moment an American swindles a fellow American out of anything over $10,000 and his wife becomes privy to the news, there ensues an immediate moving out of Grand Rapids and a moving in of the Louis. Tudor paneling takes the place of the wall-paper with the red roses on it; a fake Florentine cabinet is installed where the old horse-hair

"show independence and integrity of taste. You are of the aristocratic tendency. You are, like myself, an artist."

Lorinda thrilled to the flattery of the great man. This was more like it. And more like it still was the Ravel Spanish Rhapsody that the great man's Guidoesque hand had now begun to play upon her arm. "If only he wouldn't talk so much," thought Lorinda. "Or if talk he must, if only he would stick to the personal."

Why *did* he talk so much? Was it possible that —? She recalled the saying about the inanition of men who talked a lot. No, she would not allow herself the thought. It couldn't be; it surely couldn't be. She looked at him closely, but even as her forehead began to wrinkle ever so slightly in doubt, she heard the alleviating words: "Lorinda, do you like me?"

"I admire writers above all other men," she permitted herself, after a pause, discreetly to reply.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I find that I get the most diversion, among the arts, from literature. Music doesn't satisfy me half so greatly. Literature brings afresh to me the thoughts of other men. Music brings back to me simply my own thoughts."

"But I wasn't speaking of literature, my dear;

sofa stood; a department-store version of a Sixteenth Century chasuble takes the place of the old crazy-quilt; and a Ming cake-box now rests on the table that held the sea-shell from Atlantic City and the souvenir hour-glass from Niagara Falls. Bogus Derbyshire chairs, counterfeit Queen Anne and Directoire mirrors, Woolworth Venetian glass, pseudo-Gothic brocatelle curtains and Della Robbia sitz-baths clutter up the seignorial housescape, and Louis Quatorze, Quinze and Seize beds, chaises-longues and stools are rushed in to take the place of the former brass bedsteads, folding davenports and Morris and Roycroft chairs. An old Spanish gateway, purchased at an auction sale of the household goods of the illustrious Castillian don, the late Irving Goldfarb, is put up where the folding-doors were, and the scene is further enriched with what one sees marvelously advertised in the interior decoration magazines as Chinese samovars and Regence corner cabinets of Chinese lacquer. When one enters the home of a foreigner, one is able to recognize it at once, whether it be English, German, French, Italian or what not. When one enters the home of a well-to-do American, one feels as if one were on a Cook's Tour."

"Oh," murmured Lorinda. "Great God!" thought Lorinda.

"But you, my dear," continued Hemingham,

I was speaking of myself—and not as a writer and an artist but as a man."

"Yes," admitted Lorinda with a proficient softness, "I like you."

The Spanish Rhapsody moved on gradually toward the Malaguena.

"Would you want me for your lover?"

The words struck her as somewhat too blunt, but Hemingham, she reflected, was a genius and genius, she simultaneously reflected, properly has no need of the circumlocutions of the herd. She made no answer with her lips; her features, indeed, she artfully manoeuvered into all the horror and contradictory beatification of a Goya war painting; but her eyes took Hemingham's slowly into them. And, delicately and with a convincing demureness, she proceeded enthusiastically to resign herself to the worst. Stealing a glance at her little wrist-watch, she wondered how long it would be delayed.

"I could love you, my dear Lorinda,"—she didn't quite fancy the sound of the word *could*—"I could love you so beautifully," Hemingham continued, "for I am a believer, as you know from my novels, in love, in beauty, in romance. There is a type of man who, in the presence of an attack of the emotional inflammation known as romantic love, fights it exactly as he fights liquor. He drinks not to get pleasurably inebriated and to sit magnificently for

the time being on the heights of Olympus, but to keep cockily sober and prosaically himself. He drinks not toward a gladsome state but against it, by way of proving to himself and to his comrades that he can guzzle his fill without batting an eye. He challenges the effect of liquor, and strains his innards in a determined and nonsensical effort to deny its effect. While the rest of the boys are having a gay time singing 'I've Been Working on the Railroad,' kissing the bartender and standing on their heads in the cuspidors, he, forgetting that he will in all probability have just as big a hangover the next day, sits superiorly and cynically apart meditating, between hiccups and attacks of heartburn, what damned fools his fellow idiots are. I am, I may assure you, not that sort of man."

"Then—?" hinted Lorinda.

"I hate the average cynic," he went on. "The cynicism that is born of defeat is pitiable and worthless. It is only the cynicism that is born of success that is penetrating and valid. I have been successful." He paused dramatically. He surveyed himself, out of the corner of an eye, in the mirror on the opposite wall, not without satisfaction. "I am not too vain, tell me that I am not."

Lorinda took the right corner of her lower lip with an upper tooth, converting a dangerous smile into a semblance of gracious reflection.

"I prefer the vain man to the faint-hearted one," she said. "I appreciate that it isn't popularly believed, but it has been my own experience to find that the vain man pretty generally has some ground for his vanity. Sometimes, of course, the ground isn't a very lofty one, but at least it is a ground. Even the man who is pleased with his own looks seems to me a more comprehensible one than the one who apologetically laments the fact that he has no looks to be pleased with."

Hemingham, converting the general philosophy into an acceptable specificness, bowed his appreciation of her tribute to his pulchritude.

"Thank you, my dear Lorinda. We should get on well with each other. I am glad you approve of me."

"I adore a romantic man," was all that she could think to say at the moment.

"The loudest deriders of romantic love," Hemingham quickly followed her up, "will generally be found to be the men with the roundest bellies."

Lorinda stifled a bit of a gasp. It was fortunate for the great man, she thought, that the mirror on the opposite wall permitted him only a view of himself above the waistline.

"But before I make love to you, my dear," she heard him go on, "let us talk a little about ourselves." His hand, evidently pleased with the prospect, at least as it concerned himself, momentarily

delayed its odyssey. "I made a remark about vanity. You are right; why shouldn't I be vain? I am, and I know you won't mind my saying it, my dear, the best of modern American novelists. Take the others. Cabell is an excellent craftsman, but he has utterly no emotion. What's more, he has only one idea, the rewriting of 'Fanny Hill' in terms of mythology and allegory. He thus succeeds only in taking all the aphrodisiacal bounce out of 'Fanny' and all the pure beauty out of mythology and allegory. He laboriously devises an evasive synonym for phallus and works for the same kind of startled and surprised laugh that a music show comedienne like Beatrice Lillie gets when she seems about to exclaim, 'For Christ's sake!' and ends by exclaiming 'For cry-ing out loud!' Dreiser is like an actor in the rôle of Hamlet: he can feel tragedy proficiently but he can't write it. Once upon a time, long ago, he was able to, but now he gets his effects, as the actor gets them, by exuding the emotions that lie inevitably, naturally and easily in his materials without sharing in their actual literary creation. I point to 'An American Tragedy' as an example. One doesn't read Dreiser so much as one *feels* Dreiser. His work moves one as the tears of an ignorant child do, automatically and mechanically rather than artistically. The moment the child begins to explain why he is crying or the moment

Dreiser begins to elaborate upon his simple feeling with the help of the English language, one's sympathy and compassion begin to evaporate. Sinclair Lewis is a fine reporter who has condemned himself to work on his own tabloid newspaper. He sensationalizes his materials out of their intrinsic power of persuasion, like a Christian evangelist emphasizing the lack of beauty in Hindu worship by sticking pins into himself."

"But what of Mr. Hergesheimer?" interjected Lorinda, deftly counterfeiting a yawn into an appearance of open-mouthed awe at her companion's critical acumen.

"Hergesheimer has certain of my virtues," admitted Hemingham. "But, what with his over-insistence upon pseudo-colorful writing, his work amounts to little more than Anderson Galleries literature. He started out in life as a fourth-rate painter in oils and by dint of great effort has raised himself to the position of a second-rate painter of literature."

He paused.

"You are not only a great novelist," Lorinda despairingly encouraged him, "you are also a wonderful critic."

"Thank you, my dear," he condescended. "I pride myself upon my talent in that direction. We have all too few competent critics. The older group,

Irving Babbitt, Brownell, More and that crowd, spend all their time denouncing the middle group, Mencken, Nathan, Boyd and that lot; the middle group spend all their time denouncing the older group; the younger group, Wilson, Seldes, Waldo Frank and such, spend all their time denouncing the middle group; and the in-between group, Van Wyck Brooks, the Van Dorens, Lewisohn and company, spend all their time taking stock of and indirectly denouncing themselves. They consequently get nowhere. It's a case of dog eat dog, including the tin cans tied by each to the other's tail. They are none of them critics of art; they are simply critics of critics. They stage a constant nigger battle royal, with art barred at the entrance. Babbitt, Brownell and More are senile Anglophiles in Civil War uniforms who believe that Victoria is still queen of England and that the present Prince of Wales is lamentably enamoured of Lily Langtry. Mencken, Nathan and Boyd are Germanophiles who play Schubert on trumpets, who confuse loud vituperation with intellectual strength and who believe that they are wits because they write endless *doubles ententes* for such innocent words as *umbilicus*, *Hempdschweif* and *tibia*. Wilson, Seldes, Frank and the other *New Republic* boys simply put feather dusters on their heads and run around the backyard under the delusion that they are murderous

and scalping Cherokees. They have nothing to say, and, by God, they are going to say it! As for Brooks, he is a grandpa Faust who has rouged his critical opinions into a semblance of virile youth. As for Lewisohn, he is simply a circumcised Methodist."

"Mr. Hemingham!" exclaimed Lorinda with artful indignation.

"Aren't you interested in sex?" Hemingham demanded.

Overjoyed at the sudden and unexpected turn in the conversation and with a difficultly simulated maidenliness, Lorinda allowed, in a whisper that longed to shout, that she was.

Hemingham came nearer to her and his hand, like Diderot's with Catherine, resumed its running of the scale. "Then let me call your attention," he began, "to the matter of sex in our literature. Does it occur to you that there isn't a single one of our more conspicuous novelists who hasn't at one time or another been argued to be an indecent fellow because he has so much as hinted that men and women are not always disciples of Onan. Dreiser and Cabell don't need recalling; they have been denounced as lewd fellows on many occasions. But think of Hergesheimer when he wrote of Savina Grove, of Lewis when he wrote of Gantry, of Sherwood Anderson when he wrote of Winesburg and 'Many Marriages,' of Cather even, when she wrote of the

opera singer in 'Youth and the Bright Medusa', of Van Vechten when he wrote of Zimbule in 'The Blind Bow Boy' and of the Afroharlemites, of Tom Beer when he wrote of his Ohio farm fad, of Scott Fitzgerald when he wrote of a Princeton boy, of Hemingway and Susan Glaspell and—"

Lorinda's nervous shuffling was not lost upon the speaker. "But I needn't go on," he interrupted himself, to Lorinda's relief.

"Then you, as I, often see only beauty in sex," she hinted broadly.

"The aristocrat, the man with a long fibula, always sees beauty in sex. It is the peasant, the man with a diminutive fibula, who sees ugliness in it because he hasn't the breeding, experience, imagination and power to convert it into something thrillingly beautiful. To him it is a weakness, not a strength."

Lorinda felt that it would not be long now.

"That," said Hemingham, "is the trouble with the American novel."

"What is?" Lorinda almost shrilled in despair.

"With a few immediately recognizable exceptions, the novel in America suffers from the fact that it is written by men and women who, for all their pretence to the contrary, are in the matter of mind, life, attitude and environment essentially and actually country-jakes. This imbued yokel

grain shows itself whenever they engage themes and characters not themselves intrinsically yokel—and not only then, but also on occasion even when they concern themselves with such very themes and characters. Conning at such times many an otherwise meritorious novel, the more culturally experienced and cosmopolitan reader is periodically alienated from complete concord and respect by the author's unconscious betrayal of himself as cousin at least to the characters he dissects and as a more or less comfortable habitué of the sorry landscape he describes. The American novel in the aggregate has straw in its hair and a trace of cow on its boot even when its hair has been deceptively polished to a tony gloss and when the mark on its boot is English. Written in the main by provincials, worthy though they are, one misses in it that silent and hidden yet pervasively articulate metropolitan and world-balanced note that one finds in the novels of even the lesser Europeans."

"But—" Lorinda protested mildly.

"But what?" inquired Hemingham unconcernedly.

"But what has all that got to do with *us*?"

"What has it got to do with us? What has it got to do with us? It has a *very great deal* to do with us!" he announced.

"Then"—she could stand it no longer—"come

close to me and put your arms around me and tell me what it *has* got to do with us."

He came close and could feel the tom-tom that had usurped the place of her heart.

"Tell me," she breathed. "Tell me quickly."

He could feel the tom-tom's insistent staccato.

"Oh, my Lawrenceana rose, how lovely you are, how lovely!" he whispered.

"Tell me, tell me please, please tell me," her voice trembled.

"It has this to do with us, lovely one," he answered. "What we must develop, in order to breed novelists who can take their places with the best of Europe, is first and foremost an aristocracy, an aristocracy of culture as opposed to the present spurious automat culture. The stranger from Mars, arriving suddenly in our midst, would unquestionably be stunned by the unwonted air of culture which currently pervades the republican scene. On all sides, he would hear a familiarity with hitherto dark subjects; on all sides, an acquaintance with terminology hitherto wholly dissociated from the American vocabulary. Such words and phrases as *brachycephalic, dolichocephalic, Homo neandertalensis, Cro-Magnon, transcendental dialectic, creative evolution, hero-morality, Greek demonology* and *behaviorism* would fall with a promiscuous novelty upon his ear, and he would be puzzlingly

entertained by a widespread and apparently intimate knowledge of such esoteric topics as the Dikasteria, the causes of the Peloponnesian war, the philosophy of Empedocles, the 'Novum Organum', the bipolar attitude, the erotogenetic theories of Oberholzer, the technique of Berlioz and the love life of Benedetto Croce. His awe and bepuzzlement, however, would not last long, for if he hung around for more than a few minutes he would discover that beyond these impressive conversational Alps lay only a wop numskullery, full of sound and significant of nothing.

"During the last two or three years the country has assimilated a superficial veneer of culture as high-sounding and as false as an April Fool's Day fire alarm. Countless Outline books, Stories of this and that, and other such short-cuts to knowledge have enjoyed a tremendous popularity and have been seized upon by the mob to acquire in a few hours the wisdom of the ages. Plato, Spinoza and Kant have been mastered during lunch; the history of mankind has been learned in the shower-bath; the mysteries of science and the arts, from the Copernican theory to the first movement of Beethoven's C minor, have been gobbled whole while changing shirts. The most casual conversation, formerly given over to jazz, baseball and the one about the Irishman and the Jew, is now interlarded

with learned allusions to the Lamarckian view of evolution, Locke's 'Essay on the Human Understanding', the myth in primitive psychology, and the idiosyncrasies of the ego. The populace drops its money into the book-seller's slot and draws out educational sandwiches, mainly cheese. A homeopathic culture spreads from coast to coast. The world's literature is reduced to a five-foot shelf; the piano is mastered by mail in ten days; the whole history of civilization is compressed into a book shorter than a single novel by Knut Hamsun. And a comprehensive sophisticated ignorance decorates the countryside. Everybody is educated, like a coon debating club.

"Out of such an environment, we can't develop first-rate novelists; we can develop only posturing yokels. Nor can we develop first-rate novelists out of newspaper shops, in which so many of our present-day writers have been bred. As I once wrote, the tradition, fondly cherished in certain quarters, that newspaper training is one of the greatest and most valuable boons that a human being can enjoy, remains with us. Propagated largely by old reporters who have never succeeded in getting out of the business and who, at fifty-five or so, are still covering the exploits of Ida von Claussen and the bigger and better fires, the legend has served not only as a philosophical anodyne for

themselves but as something with which to impress cubs just out of college and with enough money to set 'em up at the speakeasy nearest the shop, or older fellows lodged by fate in trades theoretically less romantic. Newspaper training is valuable only as any other form of elementary education and instruction is valuable. Four years of it is more than ample. If a man has talent of any kind, he may use it as a stepping-stone, but he had better jump off before it is too late. Newspaper work long indulged in gives birth, with few exceptions, simply to a lot of impoverished ancients with a gold-headed cane apiece who know some amusing reminiscential anecdotes and who can familiarly call a few conspicuous local muckamucks by their first names. As I said before, we—you and I—can't hope for an aristocracy of literature in this country until we develop a race of men with long fibulæ. My own fibula, thank God, is—"

A loud, agonized shriek cut Hemingham short. Lorinda had fainted.

## CHAPTER V

LORINDA went about with a look as desolate as a row of empty bookshelves. Four months had passed since her melancholy adventure with Gilbert Hemingham. During them, she had had three proposals, including one of marriage, but they had not interested her: her determination proceeded as it had begun. Literature must be her lover; a representative of it must be the father of her first memorable peccadillo. None other could she imagine. She was, in a sense, as one may perceive, a moral young woman, or at least an aesthetically moral one.

Early Summer had descended upon New York and this only added to her psychic discomfiture. Early Summer in London, Paris or almost any other European city she could have abided, but in New York it accentuated her desolation. Any young woman in Lorinda's idealistic amatory frame of mind—and may we not imagine that there are conceivably thousands?—will understand. For in the relatively short span of ten years New York has changed from what it was then knowingly called—the best Summer resort in America—into one indistinguish-

able from a bouillabaisse containing, as its outstanding ingredients, the Matteawan Insane Asylum, the Great K. and A. Train Robbery and the Rahway Boiler Works, with overtones of George Antheil and an epileptic fit. Once, and not so long ago, a city of Summertime gaiety and charm, it has become a mere sizeable suburb of Coney Island, noisy, garish, mercenary, convulsive and, deep within its heart, homesick for the days and, more importantly, the nights that are gone. Those were the days and the nights before the amalgamated forces of ugliness, presently so dominant in the Republic, laid the trail of powder that was to blow up the metropolis as a trysting place with all the pleasures that are ever, and must ever be, identified with a metropolis, as the metropolis of any nation is a nation's playground. It is always, in a sense, an institution more or less apart from the rest of the country, a gala oasis in the democratic or monarchical desert, where the lights are brighter, the laughter louder, and the paint redder. Take away the gay spirit of a nation's key city and you take away the nation's silver rattles, Chinese lanterns and colored balloons. In Winter, when the heart of man is chilled, all this doesn't matter so much. But when Spring oozes warmly green into Summer and the heart of man figs itself out in saucy hues, it matters a great deal. And it has mattered a great deal

to New York and to all who once found there a release of the spirit on the soft, caressing evenings of the year.

As is always the case when moralists seek to better their fellow men by compulsion, those fellow men, like small boys ever, are wont to finger their noses and to behave in a way that they would never have behaved had they been left alone. As a result, one finds Summertime New York today vulgar where once it was blithesome, and shabbily sneaky where once it was forthright and engagingly innocent. In place of the quiet roof-gardens where one might dawdle away the evenings over a harmless silver fizz, there are now homicidal speakeasies hidden away in call-houses and garages. In place of the cool and breezy window-tables of Delmonico's and Sherry's, with small string orchestras playing softly, we have a Tin-Pan Alley racket in miserable dives, and over-decorated, over-palmed hotel restaurants whose superficial layers of cretonne can't quite conceal their essential plush spirit, and loud, hot Broadway dogholes posturing feebly as French supper clubs. On the site of the old beer-gardens, where once one might sit under the trees and sip a *Seidel* to the strains of "Rosen aus dem Süden," and mayhap, if one was so minded, negotiate such a cheese sandwich as had never been seen this side of the Löwenbräukeller, there is either a movie house

grinding out mother-love and detective films or a rotisserie with a window full of yellowed veal loafs spinning 'round in an effort to persuade passersby that they are chickens. Small wonder that Victor Herbert and Jim Huneker died before their time!

Gone is the little terrace of the Beaux Arts, overlooking Bryant Park. There, on that cool little terrace, with the stars free from electric interruption by mechanical piano, cigarette and chewing-gum signs, Richard Harding Davis and Bob Collier and John Fox, Jr., and all their cronies used to gather over the juleps and improve their souls. Gone is the awninged terrace of the Knickerbocker that looked down upon a thoroughfare free from tin pianos rattling away at tin tunes and from dollar-diamond emporiums, Chinatown sucker-buses, orangeade stands, hot-dog wagons and pseudo-Danish pastry parlors. There Booth Tarkington and George Ade and Peter Dunne sat and ate Charlie's *hors d'œuvres* by the hour and listened to the violins sing Lehar and drank their bottle without fear of the wrath of God and the federal police. Gone are Martin's with its marble tables, and the nights when one might sit at tables on the grass at the Casino in Central Park and while the time away over a glass of Moselle, and the sidewalk tables under the great striped awning at Bustanoby's in Columbus Circle, and the spacious high-windowed atelier of Herr

Pabst just a stone's throw to the south, and the Castel del Remy (let us bow our heads out of respect for the dear departed) at the Brevoort, and Terrace Garden with its copiously bemedalled bandmaster swinging his baton in tempo with the galloping white-aproned beer waiters, and Unter den Linden with its trees and gravel paths and iron tables under the Summertime sky, and the nights when one might lounge at ease on the high roofs of the Waldorf, Astor and Majestic hotels and swap diverting lies with a fair one over Lacrima Christi—safe from the tortures of kettle-drums and saxophones, and the breezes of the Hudson gaining fragrance at Claremont from countless frost-covered rickeys, and Captain Churchill's hearty handshake, Jack Dunston's affable Irish smile, Joe Fejer's ever-ready violin and Nick's warm Bavarian hello. Their places have been taken by a horde of bogusly tony Theodores, by a hundred and one senescent breasts of guinea-hen and middle-devastating ginger-ales, by crowded and suffocating restaurants offering as much relaxation as an advertisement of Lionel Strongfort's, by a jabbering, spending, bad-whiskey-guzzling, over-dressed horde of excited, jazz-crazy dolts, with plain-clothes men watching them.

A metropolis naturally suffers more than its sister cities, large or small, when laws and regulations

are made to hamstring its predilections in the way of amusement. One may without injury to the morale of a dray-horse wield a whip, but the morale of a circus ring goes to pieces save the whip be used sparingly. The circus ring of New York has been whipped to death. All that is left of it, now that its natural, unforced gaiety is gone, is the sawdust and the smell.

Think of a New York before the moralists descended upon it, and of its night-time amusements as against those of today. Who doesn't remember when one of the exciting sights of the night-time town was nothing more risqué than a cow munching grass on the roof of Hammerstein's Victoria? The cow's place, due to the zealousness of the puritanical guardians, has been taken by hundreds of half-naked young demi-reps, black and white, shaking that thing in the so-called night clubs. Who doesn't remember when one might sit an entire evening over a dollar and a half bottle of Rhine wine at Scheffel Hall, near Union Square, and discuss Beethoven, Chopin and Lillian Russell with Huneker, Vance Thompson, Percy Pollard and all that nectarious crew? Presently, if one doesn't order up twenty-five dollars' worth of Staten Island salicylic acid with a Cordon Rouge label on it, one will be ejected from any speakeasy by the bouncer. And if one mentions, within the hearing of any

one, Beethoven or Chopin, God knows what may happen! Rigo and his fiddle have passed from the old Café Boulevard, his place taken in a dozen cafés by singers of dirty blues songs. The old fellow, his name was Vosberg, who used to play Schumann on the piano up at Sebastian Müller's, he too is gone, his place in turn taken by interpreters of Gershwin on a harmonica and Irving Berlin on a saw. Suggestive lyrics set to the inspirations of East Side one-finger composers have driven before them the old melodies of "The Belle of New York," "Florodora," "The Fortune Teller," and "San Toy." The Castles' grace has given way to the Black Bottom, and the waltzes of Joan Sawyer have surrendered to the undressed gymnastics of second-rate importations from the Folies Bergère, and the light feet of Florence Walton and Leonora Hughes have passed from the night-time dance floors to the clatter of small-time hard-shoe hoofers. The order of the New York night is noise, wood alcohol and broken noses. . . .

There was nothing, true enough, to compel Lorinda to stay in New York if she didn't wish to. Her family had a house at Southampton and she might have gone there, but she couldn't stand the place. Week-ends spent there, she found, were enough. The place itself was charming, but after she had drunk three cocktails she was unhappy over

the lack of any conciliatory reciprocal excitement. She didn't care to dance with the young men she had known since childhood: they seemed to her so many dull cousins. After a brief swim in the mornings, she considered that she had had sufficient exercise. She didn't care to waste her energy batting at tennis balls or swinging golf clubs: such diversions she considered meet only for inevitable wall-flowers and old maids who had nothing to store up their energy for. The men in general whom she met had nothing to recommend them to her. They were, some of them, attractive enough so far as looks went, but they had no glamour: successful Wall Street men, men who gabbled to her of Texas Guinan, Helen Morgan and jazz, men who talked of Lindbergh, golf and polo, men who got excited over moving pictures of lion hunts in African jungles, men with pride in their two-generation families' importance, men who postured a spurious sophistication, men, fat and prosperous and self-satisfied, who confided to her that their ambitions had been to be painters. New York, she considered, was better than this. There, she might conceivably meet the congenial spirit that her heart, so to speak, was set upon. She was right. In fact, she was doubly right. For there, just four months and a day after Gilbert Hemingham had disappointed her expectations, she experienced the in-

ordinate pleasure of meeting not only H. C. Morton, but John Greene Norton for good measure.

H. G. Morton and John Greene Norton, as everyone knows, were—in fact, are—the self-elected and enthusiastically self-indorsed leaders of the American pie-projection attroupement. As critics of art, literature, drama, music, theology, epistemology, philology, economics, politics, American life —indeed, as critics of everything—they were the despair of college professors and the delight of college boys. Their influence was so great and they themselves were so feared that often, so tremendous was the national vibration, they quaked in their own boots. Their names appeared in the newspapers with such regularity and profuseness that a large press clipping bureau set itself up to cater to them alone. They had few friends and many enemies, a circumstance condoned by them to themselves in the self-confected epigram, "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make popular." They were, however, genial fellows and rather *soigné* in their way—Morton, indeed, had once been mistaken by a somewhat inebriated colored man for Mr. H. L. Mencken—, although both were deplorably given to drink and, at the end of the week, showed their ages.

Morton had already published two hundred and sixty-three books, Norton two hundred and fifty-

three. Norton had gone abroad one year for a couple of months to see a girl, which accounts for his lower percentage. Morton's most quoted work—though it is surely too well known to repeat the fact—was the three-pound "The Nuisance of the English Language," recalled particularly for its passages on slang. "The decline of formal speech begins to be evident all over the world," he wrote. "Language appears gradually to be divesting itself of its boiled shirt and spats and to be lounging into negligé and pantoufles. In the United States, as Polichinelle knows, slang has usurped so great a part of the King's tongue that the use of the latter is today confined chiefly to justices of the Supreme Court, headwaiters, the reverend clergy and professors in those colleges that can't afford good football teams. In England, slang, some of it of American derivation and much more of it home-brew, has worked its wicked will upon high and low, until presently about the only Englishmen who employ scrupulously meticulous discourse are the pushing ex-tradesmen and war profiteers recently elevated to knighthood. Germany, too, has come under the spell, to such an extent, indeed, that the visiting Berlitz graduate who so much as tries to order a simple *Eisbein mit Erbsenpurée und Sauerkohl* or even a *Rehkeule in Sahne mit Apfelmus* has something of a time about it. But even

more than England and Germany does France show signs of the new linguistic dispensation, so many signs, in point of fact, that the French currently find it necessary to get out numerous handbooks explaining the meanings of the countless new incursions into the language, that the nation as a whole may keep abreast of them.

"The only thing that keeps slang from becoming an international language, the authentic Esperanto, is its periodic autochthonism. Its occasional purely indigenous and inelastic quality lies largely in its evocation of visual images that are peculiar to its own land and people. The slang of America is thus sometimes as strange and unintelligible on the whole to England as that of England is to Germany or as that of the latter is to America. While there are some words and phrases in each that are readily caught and assimilated by aliens, much of the argot remains cold and dark to them. When an American uses such a word, for example, as *bleachers*, there is evoked a very definite picture of open, sun-baked stands which is completely lost to an Englishman or a German. When a German, in turn, employs such a word as, say, *Maultasch*, there is evoked a picture that an American fails to conjure up. When an Englishman uses such a phrase, for instance, as *black country*, it brings to his mind the picture of mining regions where, to the mind of

an American or German, it brings the picture of Negro districts. There are, as I have said, some slang words and phrases that can induce the same visual images in different peoples, among them, for example, the American *cutie* or *bonehead*, the English *topper*, the German *Lausbub'*, and the French *lovelace* (for a seducer) or *lucarne* (garret-window) for a monocle. But in general each country's slang is peculiar to its own collateral image which has inspired it and which it inspires reciprocally."

Norton's most quoted work—though it, in turn, is surely too well known to repeat the fact—was "Advice and Instructions to God: An Amendment to the Universe." Its tenor may be recalled by reprinting a paragraph or two:

§ 1

Pursuing my series of suggestions to the Creator by way of aiding him to make a more satisfactory job of things, I take the liberty of bringing to his attention the matter of the human eye. In the initial fabrication of this eye, it seems to me that he overlooked an important point and, in the overlooking, contributed further to the unhappiness of his creatures. It is the current misfortune of mortals that their eyes remain relatively young while their bodies grow old. That is, in a psychological, not a

biological, sense. The eye of a man of fifty remains youthful in its appraisal of feminine charms, plays the constant Iago to his corporeal self, and so tortures him. The eye of a woman of forty remains similarly girlish in its view of the boys, plays in turn constantly the derisory critic to her own waning charms, and so tortures her. Something should be done about it to bring peace and contentment to the hapless children of earth. I shall exert my influence with a negligent Almighty the day I arrive in Heaven.

§ 2

I offer this suggestion to God when he sets about creating a new world. Let him make all men rich in the Springtime and poor in Winter. Thus may men be happy when they yearn most for happiness and be driven to hard, productive work and to the serious business of life in the naturally sad and bleak period of the year. I have many other equally valuable ideas, but I am not going to give them away for nothing.

Other celebrated works of the Messrs. Morton and Norton were "Distastes," "Disgusts," "Calamities," "Pains and Aches," "Outrages," "Smelling a Rat," "Dark Doubts," "Cum Grano Salis," "Demurrers," "A Book of Protests," "The Whim-

Wham of Literature," "The Drivel of Drama," "The American Dunghill," and "Oh God! What a Pfui!", the last named savagely illustrated by Covarrubias, Ralph Barton and Massaguer, autographed by the authors—with the date magnanimously thrown in gratis—and sold by their publisher in a pink, green, maroon, yellow and cerise birch-bark binding at forty-six dollars a copy.

Lorinda's meeting with the two geniuses was accidental. It was inevitably so, since it was their technique to give themselves an aspect of importance by remaining somewhat bumptiously aloof from everyone, particularly such persons as they admired and as admired them. The intimate circumstances of the encounter need not be gone into in detail; suffice it to say that Lorinda, as has been noted, had very slim ankles, and that it occurred on a Hoboken ferry—on the return trip.

Our fair friend could hardly believe her great good fortune. Beside this illustrious couple, even Hemingham evaporated into zero in her new estimation. For years she had read of them, gazed at their photographs in the periodicals and rotogravure sections, quoted them. Hemingham, she now told herself, had been only an illusion, a makeshift substitute for literary gentlemen like these. But she was confronted with a problem. Which of

the two should it be? Not being a gambler and not desirous of leaving the solemn decision to anything so fortuitous, it wouldn't do, she concluded, to shoot dice. And—she brought herself up with a start—was she not taking too much for granted? She had heard that neither of her new gods was susceptible; that while both had an eye to the ladies, provided they were fair, moderately white and able to take a drink without giggling, neither was possessed of an impressionable endocardium. It would not be easy, she knew, but some trivial thing, she hoped, might conceivably turn the tide in her favor. She had faith in the power of trivialities. It is the apparently trivial, she ruminated, that gives birth to the momentous. Cleopatra's nose, Newton's apple, Franklin's kite, Du Barry's dimple, a bundle of tea in Boston harbor, a rainy day at Waterloo—such trivialities have changed the course of science and of empires and of men. She would wait and see. And meanwhile, she would assiduously exercise herself, with all her virtuosity at withdrawn demureness, to lure at least one of the twain into her life. She might have to wait and scheme and plan for days, weeks, months, but the reward would justify her patience, her high resolve and fortitude.

"Where can we get a little drink, sweetbread?"

demanded Morton and Norton as one, the moment the ferry docked.

Lorinda experienced a soft intrabuccal chuckle. Maybe she wouldn't have to wait so long, at that.

## CHAPTER VI

MORTON and Norton had now been drinking up Lorinda's gin for more than a week. In fact, the only evening they had missed at her apartment was one when, in the preliminary telephone amenities, she had carelessly let fall the information that her bootlegger had not showed up that day and that she was down to her last half-bottle. Against neither of them had she been able to make much headway, although, between drinks, both often confided to her that she was exactly the girl they had long been searching for, and that her liquor was excellent. But on each occasion when she endeavored to bring the conversation around to a more esoteric point, they either simply patted her on the shoulder like some nice little dog or sat down to the piano and played an ear-splitting duet.

Lorinda loved music, but hardly that which proceeded largely from the loud pedal and gin. Yet love must bear much on its road to consummation, and she permitted herself a measure of stoicism. If she could ever get the two apart, she felt that time might not be wasted. But it seemed to be difficult.

Meanwhile, there was nothing for her to do but to lay in large supplies of liquor and wait.

The routine of the pair, once they arrived at Lorinda's apartment, had been thus far undeviating. They would enter, squash their felt hats into their pockets, kiss her hand, inquire solicitously after her welfare, look out of the corners of their eyes to see whether there was enough ice on the tray, deliver themselves of an introductory curse upon the world, bemoan the gradual hardening of their arteries—the meantime edging toward an advantageous position near the good cheer—, and fall into endless disquisitional solos.

Morton would begin something after this fashion:

"It seems to me that the Prohibitionists, in their efforts to keep the country dry, have overlooked one argument that might win to their side a number of the more civilized Americanos who have no sympathy with them at present and who, indeed, would be only too glad to see them kit and caboodle in Gehenna. The argument in question concerns the disgrace that Americanos in the mass brought upon alcohol when it was free to them, the manner in which they manhandled it, and the consequent and eminently sound deduction that it should therefore be taken from them, as a Stradivarius should

be taken from a man who plays Wolf-Ferrari on it or as first-rate art should be removed from the British National Gallery.

"What I am getting at is not the Americano's habit of excessive topery, for that is and should be no one's business but the individual's. If a man wants to drink himself into unconsciousness and, in the process, gradually acquire everything from cirrhosis of the liver to gall-stones, I can't see that it is anyone's affair save his, granting, of course, that his wife and children esteem him as husband and father no more than is usual. What I have in mind, rather, is the Americano's complete and even shameful ignorance of alcoholic tipples, of their finest nature, of their infinite charm and beauty, and of their proper service. Such banalities as his accustomed serving of highballs with the roast, or of champagne with the pie, I pass over; they are too well known to call for comment. But I doubt that his monkeyshines in other directions, during the days when he could have anything to drink that he wanted, are sufficiently appreciated. Surely they are not appreciated by such organizations as the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, *und so weiter*, for, if they were, those tongs might deftly spread the news broadcast and so subtly turn much of the present indignation and a good share of the raspberries against their enemies.

"Consider, for example, the kind of glasses that Americanos used for wassail purposes at the height of the gala era. Along about 1890 there suddenly appeared a craze for colored glass, and it was a rare household that didn't stock up with a variety of ruby, green, yellow and purple vessels, purchasable at the nearest crockery shop at very cheap prices. These were considered very tasty by the châtelaines of innumerable ménages, and were employed by them on every possible occasion. Claret and Burgundy were served in green and yellow glasses; Sauterne in ruby glasses; Rhine wines in purple glasses. Even whiskey and water in an emerald glass was not an unusual phenomenon. The general spectacle was much as if sorbets were to be served in a soup dish or meat and potatoes on a brass salver, and it was just as disturbing to the refined palate. The tinctorial debauching of otherwise lovely and estimable beverages spread from coast to coast; there was no sense of discrimination; the fact that only appropriately blended glasses were used in Europe for certain vintages was lost sight of in the consuming rage to use glasses of any and all hues at any and all times. And there ensued a great gagging on the part of all the more well-bred and sensitive bibbers. For even the saloons and restaurants were fetched by the colored glass fad and, save one confined one's self to *Schnapps* or

lager, one couldn't for the life of one avoid the consequent chromatic nausea. Rhine wine and seltzer were pushed over the bar in sickly Nile-green glasses or even sicklier red ones; brandy was delivered in amethystine glasses; Kirschwasser was served in saffron receptacles; Martini and Manhattan cocktails were presented in chalices that literally yelled at them. The extent to which these atrocities went, in high places, so to speak, as well as low, can best be suggested by recalling the fact that Mr. Ward McAllister, an arbiter elegantiarum of the period who was as swell as the mumps, actually served his guests amber-colored Madeira in magenta glasses, enough to make the more conversant of them deathly ill, to say nothing of port, on one state occasion, in topaz glasses embellished with gold filigree!

"The popularity of the cocktail marked another debasing of the alcoholic art. Following the Martini, Manhattan and Old-Fashioned Whiskey cocktails —the inaugural cocktail trinity—there descended upon the American scene a hundred and one ridiculous mixtures, without rhyme or reason, that made sorry mock of respectable and intelligent drinking. The Bronx cocktail brought orange juice mixed with its gin, a combination akin to mixing prune juice with Pilsner. The Clover Club idiotically took gin and shook it up with, among other

things, the white of an egg and raspberry syrup. The Newport performed the atrocity of defiling its gin with grape-fruit juice and maraschino. The Cream Fizz went in, clown-like, for gin and sweet cream. The Guards', as it was called, tried to blend gin and Curaçao, and the Plaza, gin, pineapple and mint. Pickled onions and nuts were inserted into other cocktails, and absinthe, French vermouth and crushed cherries provided a still further corruption. The Bloodhound cocktail added two strawberries to its mongrel récipé; the Colonial actually mixed up the yolk of an egg, gin, Italian and French vermouth, white port and anisette; and the famous Bunny Hug assaulted the kidneys with rye whiskey, gin and absinthe. Benedictine and Cointreau were shaken up with mint leaves, the resulting barbarity being dubbed the Imperial cocktail; the Brandy cocktail was an attempt to bring about the miscegenation of brandy and gum syrup, to say nothing of bitters, and, sometimes, maraschino; the Champagne cocktail performed the abortion of adding lump sugar and lemon to the queen of wines; and there was a cocktail widely drunk throughout the South that was composed of half a teaspoonful of Jamaica ginger, half a pony of brandy, half a pony of port wine, one and a half ponies of blackberry brandy and some grated nutmeg.

"In the way of miscellaneous mixed drinks, there were the Champagne Cup, that heathenish hodge-podge of champagne, sugar, lemon, orange, berries, cucumber, brandy, maraschino, white Curaçao, sherry and mint; the Golden Fizz, with its lemon juice, sugar and yolk of an egg added to the gin; Plush, with its ungodly alliance of champagne and claret; Velvet, that combined champagne and stout; and the well-known Port and Starboard, composed of one-half orange Curaçao and one-half crème de menthe. The Pousse Café sought to gain an audience for itself by grading raspberry syrup, maraschino, orange Curaçao, yellow Chartreuse, green Chartreuse and brandy; the Pousse l'Amour, that was never nearer France than the old Holland House bar, by pouring into a sherry glass maraschino, the cold yolk of an egg, vanilla flavoring and cognac; the Royal Plush by stirring up champagne and Burgundy in equal parts; Shandy Gaff by combining beer or ale with ginger-ale; the Silver Fizz by merging the white of an egg, lemon juice and powdered sugar with gin; and the Syracuse Cobbler by taking proud Medford rum and fusing it with ginger-ale and lemon rind.

"As if all this wasn't enough, the alcoholic morons of the land proceeded then to a further corruption of their Heaven-sent nectars by using ice in places where ice was as completely ruinous as it would be

to a Welsh rarebit. Ice in claret became so general a thing that everyone still remembers it. Tom and Jerry, prepared hours before it was due to delight the tonsils, was preserved by putting it temporarily in the refrigerator, where it promptly lost what could never be recaptured by subsequent heating. White wines were chilled out of their quality, and even the lowly Chiantis were robbed of what bouquet they may have had by putting cracked ice into the glasses. I have drunk Moselle in those days that was made indistinguishable from colored ice-water, and Burgundy that was so cold I couldn't make out its flavor. Even beer, save in the emporia presided over by Bavarians and Bohemians, was often iced to the point where its foam took on the appearance of dry shaving lather.

"Champagne was kept lying flat on its side by ninety-nine Americanos out of every hundred who drank it, instead of being faintly tilted toward the cork, and so was gradually impaired beyond recall. Beer, in most American homes, was served in thin glasses that effeminized it. Port was guzzled at the height of Summer, and sparkling Saumurs were often poured into cut-glass pitchers and allowed to stand around on tables awaiting the moment of their service. Heavy wines, such as Chambertin, Pommard, etc., were abruptly decanted, their temperature lowered instead of slightly raised, and so

made mock of. Stout was treated as if it were beer. The champagne vintages of 1901, 1907 and 1910 were regarded as of the same merit as those of 1892, 1900 and 1906. Cognac and whiskey were gulped down as one and the same thing. The finer Bordeaux were assaulted before even their eighth birthday. The sweet Dordogne wines were served with meat and fowl, and Chablis Moutonne, 1904, the princess of its breed, was served after the soup. Precious Bourbon was contaminated with ginger-ale; brandy was ignited to amuse the children; Tokay was served in sizeable water tumblers; and the divine blood of the Gironde country was often actually sucked up through a straw.

"That such a people and such a nation do not richly deserve the visitation upon them of the Eighteenth Amendment to their Constitution, I have, my dear Mlle. Lorinda, considerable trouble in believing!"

Whereupon, without giving Lorinda time to catch her breath, Norton would proceed so:

"Back of men's indignation over Prohibition and the closing of the corner saloon, there is a deeper motive than that customarily associated with resentment over the Eighteenth Amendment's invasion of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This motive has its springs far removed from the mere cerebral centres and is imbedded in the inexorable

biological nature of the human race. For with the closing of the corner saloon there came the coincidental closing, to the agony of millions of normal Americanos, of readily available *châlets de nécessité*, without which life, for the immediate time being, must be unbearable and death's sting a dispensation most welcome. It is thus but natural that, under the existing daily circumstances, with the tortures of Torquemada as naught in comparison, the Americano still in possession of all his faculties should squirm under the Methodist heel, and should attribute his acute physical suffering to the Methodist hostility to sex in even its most innocent and boyish aspects. What are we to think, I ask you, La Lorinda, of a country whose every street corner, due to the enterprise of electric-light, postal and telegraph companies, is consecrated to the comfort of dogs, while American citizens—taxpayers, husbands and fathers—are allowed to shift as best they can?"

Lorinda was enchanted by their flow of sapience, even flattered, despite the enormous outlay she had to make for gin, that they should condescend to constitute her an audience. But she was not getting anywhere, and next year, she reflected, she would be twenty-six. Now and again she would try to divert the voluptuous garrulity into a personal and more promising channel. For instance, she would

ask, "What is your attitude toward women?", looking at Morton. Whereupon, before Morton could open his mouth, Norton, swallowing at least a quarter of a pint and hitching up his trousers, would reply, "The usual number of literary gentlemen are to be noted once again this year performing in the public prints the now familiar show of waxing lugubriously sardonic over the Americano's attitude toward his women folk. The theme is a favorite one, not only on the part of American writers, generally still wet behind the emotional ears, but also on the part of foreign literary gents and lecturers who come over here on two or three weeks' trips by way of getting away for a spell from wives who make life miserable for them at home.

"It is the customary lament of these professors, chiefly the American wing, that the Americano does not know how to handle women and that, as a consequence, he is the most brow-beaten goat in Christendom. The American male, it appears, insists upon putting women on a pedestal and viewing them with an extravagant sentimentality, all of which brings the women in due course to make a slave and a fool of him. He is forced, by his own dunderheadedness, to wear himself to a shadow making enough money to supply their needs; he is reduced from the position of master in his own house to that of lackey; he brings upon himself

humiliation and gray hair and Charley-horse. The foreign writing and lecturing gentry look no less sweetly upon him. In the European countries, they tell us, no such nonsense is tolerated. There, men are men. If a wife asks for a new hat, she gets a sock in the jaw. If a fair one makes sheep's-eyes at a fellow and then, a little later in the evening, tells him that she must go straight home to mother, the outraged fellow simply grabs her by the neck—and that's that.

"It is a point perhaps worth noting that almost all the American males who thus deplore the theoretically existing state of affairs and adopt a he attitude in its face are found upon investigation to be of a lovely, if unconscious, piece with the very suckers they describe. They are either impassionable young men who have been automatically hornswoggled into early matrimonial henpeckery or older fellows idiotically intent upon gaining back a little self-esteem after disasters by posturing a sapient yet all too transparent bravado. Nor do we find the visiting gentry much different. That one among the latter who has been loudest in his wheezes at the American male's expense was a thrice-married man who went through an infinitude of sentimental troubles with and at the hands of the girls, and another, whose identity is as quickly recognizable and who has affected a pervading cave-man philosophy,

has since ended up in the net of a cutie who, according to report, is driving the poor boob crazy.

"The truth of the matter is probably that the American male is not much different in his attitude toward the fair sex from the males of any of the other so-to-speak more civilized countries. Men, after all, when it comes to women, are pretty much damned fools wherever you find them. When the critics discharge their wisdom, they fall into the error of accepting as symbols of the male attitudes in other countries the attitudes not of the generality of the males in those countries but of the boulevardiers, or, at all events, isolated specimens. They put their faith in such dubious articles of the international credo as: (*a*), that a German always makes his wife walk behind him and carry all the heavy bundles of liverwurst; (*b*), that a Frenchman always keeps his wife in her place by having a swell-looking mistress on the side; (*c*), that an Englishman pays more attention to his horses and his pipe than to his spouse; (*d*), that a Pole and a Bohemian always make their women folk do all the farming; and so on. They delude themselves into imagining that the average Englishman, German or Frenchman is not just as big a come-on with his women, whether he is married to them or not, as the Americano. They seem to be completely unaware of the fact that if sentimentality as to women is a mark of

the Americano, it is equally a mark of his overseas brother, even though the latter's be at times dressed in different colors.

"The steadily increasing divorce rate inspired by male rebellion in America is surely no sign of an increasing sentimentality on the part of the native trouser. The number of men who murder their wives or refractory sweet ones is growing yearly, if we may put any trust in the newspapers. The California statute which allows alimony to husbands is certainly no symptom of American masculine sentimentality, nor is the Kentucky statute which allows a man a divorce if the girl he marries so much as develops a nasty temper. In what country under the sun is a poet freely permitted by law, as in the Empire State of New York, U. S. A., to beat up his wife, without fear of divorce proceedings, if she puts four lumps of sugar in his coffee when she knows that he habitually takes five?"

Or she would archly interject, "Have you never thought of love?", looking at Norton. Whereupon, before Norton could open his mouth, Morton would swallow at least half a pint, rumple his hair, and proceed thus: "Love is an emotion that lies halfway between idiocy and wisdom. I have too much wisdom already to wish to pack up and travel halfway back to the picnic-ground. Love is a delusion, like a husband's belief that he knows his wife. Does a

husband, a jackass *per se*, ever really know his wife? Answer: No. He knows the way she adjusts her garters, the way she affectionately nibbles his ear, the way she greets him when he comes in plastered at 2:30 a.m., the artistry with which she negotiates an asparagus, the kind of perfume she squirts upon herself, the way she treats her poor Uncle Ambrose and her wealthy Uncle August, her aptitude at swindling the corner grocer, her preferences in literature and her opinion of movie actors. Thus, by slow degrees, he arrives at an image of her, as a man arrives at the top of a difficult hill after slipping on a score of rocks, turning his ankle a couple of times, falling disconcertingly upon his sitspot in mementoes deposited along the arduous climb by migratory goats, and acquiring a bad cold. Thus, in due time, he begins to know his mate after a fashion. That is, he knows the real color of her hair, how she contrives to flatter him that he is something more than a miserable meal-ticket, how long she can stay awake at an Ibsen play, what she thinks of Hoover, birth control, lobster à la Newburg, Peggy Joyce and God. But all the rest is error and delusion. To the actual, intimate workings of her mind, emotions and psyche he remains a stranger until she poisons him.

"Speaking of delusion, sweetheart, you've probably noticed that every once in a while some person

announces through the newspapers that he has been visited by an angel or other ambassador of God and has been made privy to an occult message of one sort or another, to the loud and ribald contumely of close followers of the editorial pages and the comic strips. The reason for this humor at the poor soul's expense I can't fathom. He is, to be sure, an idiot, but the only difference between his idiocy and that of the rest of us is that he confesses his in the public prints. There isn't one of us who, at one time or another in his life, hasn't seen something, usually when cockeyed, that—were he impressedly to tell about it in print—would make him out a magnificent ass. Consider the crazy phenomena that present themselves to one in dreams, particularly after having eaten a couple of raw Hamburg sandwiches with onions, and that occasionally linger insistently in the waking consciousness, so greatly so that, as psychologists long ago pointed out, it is for the moment difficult to dissociate dream and reality. Or consider the cross that one can clearly discern, with a little imagination, in a banana, or the words that one with a lively and persistent fancy can fashion out of the creakings of the midnight wind in a lonely frame country house, or the ghost that every last little boy swears he has seen in a cemetery or dark barn, or the crucifixes sometimes cut into tree trunks by lightning bolts, or the long-dark

altar lamp mysteriously and divinely relighted by a dropping icicle—confoundingly miraculous to those who don't know that anyone can effect the trick if, unseen, one puts a bit of potassium on the wick—, or divinely inspired writing on the wall, actually produced by sulphuric acid applied to the wall-paper directly above the radiator, or the mystic shapes one can read into the clouds, or the hundred and one phenomena that are caused by light and sound. The man who says he was visited in the dead of night by an angel who whispered something snappy to him is not a liar; he undoubtedly was visited by an angel who did whisper something snappy to him. The only trouble with him is that he deludes himself into believing that what he saw and heard was a manifestation of the Deity and not merely a manifestation of a defective cortex or colon."

"Yes," Norton would lament, "we live in a world of delusion, in a nation of boobs! That is our misfortune; the thing is so bad it's almost contagious. If one lives in America long enough one is bound to contract boobismus himself. A nation, when all is said and done, is only as strong as the combined minds of its boobs. Great leaders and intelligent men may come and go, but the nation of boobs over which they transiently exercise control goes on and on. The Elks will outlive a score of Lincolns

and Grover Clevelands; the Moose will still be on deck singing 'Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here' long after Clarence Darrow and Nicholas Murray Butler have been mistaken for crêpes Suzette by the worms; the Knights of Pythias and the Hay Fever Association will still be respectively parading and sneezing their heads off a century after George Washington's picture has been removed from our two-cent stamps. The boob, a hundred years from now, will still cherish a passion to put on a Marine's uniform, go down to Central America and get malaria making the world safe for democracy, to massage his bald pate with dog juice in the hope of growing hair, to gape at the wisdom of the metaphysical plumber he has constituted the chief executive of his country, and to marry for love. Where is there happiness for first-rate men in such a dump? In achievement? No. Happiness rests in achievement only for mediocre men. The first-rate man finds little happiness in achievement because, at the moment of accomplishment, he is beset by doubts as to its genuine worth. He is tortured by the thought of its dubiousness and the struggle that lies always ahead of him in his effort to do really fine work. The mediocre man alone gets any happiness out of achievement, for he is mule enough to be able to persuade himself that what he has achieved is signally and finally worth-while."

It was small wonder that Lorinda speculated whether it would be her patience or her available funds for gin that would hold out the longer.

## CHAPTER VII

FIVE weeks had run their course before Lorinda's mind evolved a strategic manoeuvre to isolate Morton and Norton, without their knowing it, from their alcoholic Euterpe and Clio, from the inspirations of their pianoforte and polemic exercises. She would dilute her gin! The first bottle she would leave intact, but the other six or seven set out for the evening she would corrupt half with water. Thus, unbeknownst to them, she would still the disturbingly ubiquitous and neighbor-terrorizing renditions of "Künstlerleben" and "Wein, Weib und Gesang" and, better yet, the carbon dioxide rostrum speeches. Thus would she open the way for her subtle assault upon the personal susceptibilities of one or the other of these forensic gunmen.

At eight-thirty precisely, as was their wont, on this Summer evening the twain entered and went through their customary preliminary hand-kissing and ululations over their incipient arterio-sclerosis. At eight-thirty-five precisely, as was their wont, they got themselves outside a copious guzzle. And at eight-thirty-six precisely, as was their wont,

they confided to Lorinda that she was a swell girl and Morton began.

"The ceremonies presently attending birth and death," he oracularized, "strike me as being confused one with the other and, being thus confused and hence illogical, at odds with sound Christian doctrine. The birth of a human being, under the current ethical dispensation, is accompanied by a species of behavioristic jazz and the death of a human being by a behavioristic dirge. When a child is born, the papa celebrates the event by turning on Ben Bernie on the phonograph, dancing the hornpipe and getting himself expansively stewed. When it dies, whether in infancy or in maturity, the papa puts on crêpe, throws the whiskey bottle into the ash-can and delivers himself of mournful knells and hymns. Among all Christian people, only the Irish, knowing the Scriptures better, exercise a true discrimination in such junctures. When an Irish baby is born into this vale of tears, the ceremony is appropriate to the occasion. The father is sad; he drowns his unhappiness in drink; he fights with the neighbors. But when an Irishman dies and goes, as per Holy Writ, to bliss eternal, his relatives, mindful of Holy Writ, celebrate the enviable excursion of their loved one by holding a wake at which everyone for miles around has one hell of a good time. This, I have the honor to argue, is as things

should be! To be gay in the presence of birth and sad in the presence of death is to be an infidel, a denier of the Bible's threats and promises, an ignoble disbeliever. The true Christian, mindful that birth is but for the moment and of pain and travail in its brief day on earth compact, should greet it befittingly with melancholy, and death, the beginning of close communion with God and everlasting peace, with appropriate high spirits. Let the band play the Funeral March when the doctor joyfully announces, 'It's a boy,' and 'The Varsity Drag' or 'Shaking the Blues Away' when, some years later, he lugubriously says, 'It was gallstones.' "

It was now eight-forty, and Norton's turn. "Consider," he announced, apropos of what, save gin, Lorinda hadn't the vaguest idea, "a prize-fight! One hundred and fifty thousand suckers, laying out two and a half million dollars for the privilege, gather around a platform to learn which of two men is the greatest fighter in the world. One of the men smears vaseline all over his face so the other's blows will glide off and not hurt him. The second man is floored by the first man for the regulation count, but the latter forgets Rule No. 306 G., fails to walk to a corner previously indicated by the board of regents, and so the contest to determine which is the greatest fighter in the world must begin all over again. A rumor spreads that one of the

contestants has soaked his gloves in a cement solution; another rumor has it that the other is wearing his pants an inch and a half below the belt line so that, if he feels things going against him, he may claim one in the belly to be a foul. No blows, or so-called rabbit punches, on the back of the neck are allowed, nor is it permitted that one man stand over the other in the event of a devastating wallop, as the man knocked down must be allowed ample time to get full on his feet again and be perfectly comfortable before the other is privileged to take a sock at him. A rumor is now heard that Sig Rothenberg, the Cincinnati gambler, has framed the fight by giving one of the men's sisters-in-law a hundred thousand dollars in Liberty bonds. The sports writer for the Bluebird Syndicate claims to have definite knowledge that the other man has twelve thicknesses of tire tape wrapped around his knuckles. One of the men, the one who lay on the floor earlier in the fight for four seconds more than the stipulated ten, hands the other, now thoroughly disgusted, a mild poke on the nose, the final bell rings, and the judges declare him champion of the world!

"Meanwhile, a couple of two hundred pound truck-drivers over on Ninth avenue go to it and lick living hell out of each other."

It was now eight-forty-five and Morton ad-

dressed the meeting as follows: "In the Supreme Court of Brooklyn, N. Y., such being the profound nature of the adjudications imposed upon our loftier and more learned tribunals, a Mr. Justice Druhan recently denied the right of a youth born Simon Minsky to change his name to Cyril Merrill, to the visible anguish of the youth and the delight of a lot of Irish boys waiting outside for him with dead cats. Reading the eminent jurist's important decision, various editorial writers proceeded to spread themselves in the matter, waxing hooty over the denial of privilege and arguing that, as names didn't mean anything anyway, a man should be allowed to change his whenever and as often as he saw fit. This point of view, I regret to say, impresses me as being not only moss-eared but unsound, and not only unsound but highly asinine. While it may be all very well for the King of England, say, to change his name as he did at the outbreak of the late war, since his surname is seldom if ever employed and since it doesn't matter in either official or personal concerns whether he be George Wettin or Windsor or even Woskowitz, in the case of the average man it matters a great deal, as the latter's name is as much a part of him as his liver and as, further, a generally widespread alteration of names would bring about as much confusion, in America at least, as the current forgery of booze labels.

"So much changing of names has already been indulged in in this country, indeed, that when a stranger today waits upon one and sends up his card one can't tell whether he is black or white, Jew or Christian, English, American, German or Chinese, a financier or a beggar, a parvenu or an aristocrat, a duke in disguise or a bum. Most of the Jews, as Huneker observed, now have Christian names and many of the Christians Jewish names; chorus gals are dubbed Vanderbilts and movie gals Astors; the directory of Harlem begins to read like the cast of a Pinero play; thousands of Krauses have become Crosses and hundreds of Ching Lees have been metamorphosed into Lee Chillingsworths; hand-out men are Morgans and Cohen has become Cohanne, Coenne, Coyne and Cunningham. It has got so that one can't tell a man's real name nowadays until after he has been locked up. The result has been a great perversion and fraud in many directions, in business affairs, matrimonial, social and what not, and a skepticism that has spread to all channels of American life.

"Two things, more than any other, led to the wholesale label editing. The first, of course, was the late war, with the transformation of countless Wasserbauers into Waterbaughs, Oberfelders into Overfields and Hansdingels into Harringtons. The second was golf. With the coming into general

popularity and fashion of golf, there came also golf clubs, and with the coming of golf clubs there came also membership committees, and with the coming of membership committees there came eyes narrowed at social eligibility, and with the narrowing of the eyes there came a dazzling succession of Episcopalian Garfields, Gissings, Rossmounts and Leroys born Garfunkel, Ginsberg, Rosenberg and Levy. It is a matter of record that the telephone books in the ten largest American cities show a yearly decrease in the number of such latter names listed and a proportionate increase in the former, or of names of like mellifluence. What is true of the Jews is true also, though to a lesser extent, of Germans, Poles, Russians and other aliens in our midst. The sufficiently general and comprehensive dropping of ultima *heims, schilds, schitzes, vogels, felds, bergers, baums, blums, lichs, blatts, meiers, thals, kopfs, kinds, steins, walds, heits, sterns, strauchs, nachs, kolbs, manns, lochs, zweigs, farbs, feders, liebs, bachs, lachs, lantzs, korns, habers, dingers, auers, inskis, itzkis, ovskys, owskis, offs, witzs, wirtzs, esniks* and *odnicks* has sounded like a ton of bricks. If there isn't Goldstein hereabouts who, if not a Gillingswater or Gilbert, is not at least a Goldstine, Goldsteen, Goldston, Goldstone, Goldstien, Goldson, Goldstiènne or Goldwyn, you will have an equal job locating a Rindskopf who isn't simply

Rinds, a Morgenthal who isn't Morgan, a Greenberger who isn't Green, a Plattsfeldgraber who isn't Platt, a Kantrowitz who isn't Cantor, or a Lipinski who isn't, with simple elegance, a Lipton.

"Why all these presumable worthies wish to change their names, so long as they are at all locally pronounceable, is not easy to determine. Some of their patronymics may not be any too sweet or inspiring to the ear, but neither are some of the most august and familiar names that have been borne patiently and with fortitude for generations by some of our best Americanos, for example, Winterbottom, Pratt, Belcher, Trimmer, Hay, Grubb, Long, Short, Stout, Strong, Little, Young, Olds, New, Onderdonk, Beard, Kerr, Kip, Kountze, Whitehead, Hogg, Fish, Alcock, Clapp, Letcher, Bugbee, Doolittle, Coffin, Bottome, Cox, Snodgrass, Beers, Berry and Potts. If the disappointed young Russo-American Minsky of Brooklyn considers that his name has a too comical sound for the Anglo-American, let him think of Botts, Lovejoy, Wetmore, Squibb, Hopping and Philpotts. And if he feels that its connotation is unpleasant to him, let him meditate upon the feelings of a Cabot when the latter reflects that he bears a name that, to a Frenchman, signifies a low clown or of a Lowell when he reflects, in turn, that his name, to the German, etymologically suggests the rear end of an animal."

The clock struck nine and Norton took the floor. "One of the greatest curses of modern human intercourse," he began out of a clear sky, "is the become-widespread belief of letter-writers that they have to be witty and amusing. It is a rare individual these days who doesn't try to constitute himself an epistolary genius of one sort or another and who doesn't concern himself assiduously with being a comedian at the expense of straightforward, intelligible and intelligent correspondence. There was a time when a man could read his daily mail quickly, get at its intent immediately, and finish off that part of the day's chore with dispatch. But that day seems to be past. Today, even the most casual correspondent clutters up his letters with excursions into wheezy jocosity, with theoretically killing codas, with pseudo-comical irrelevancies and with other facetiæ that have no more place in what he is trying to say than they would have in a funeral sermon.

"The time when a letter was signed simply with a *Yours truly* or a *Sincerely* has vanished. In the stead of these we are now in for a flood of *Allons!*, *Yours with a boot in the rear for Volstead*, *May God have mercy on your old socks*, *Ecce homo!*, *Beware of blondes*, *Yours until the keg is empty*, *Yours for arson and murder*, *Yours in the name of the Twelve Apostles*, *Carpe diem!*, *Sincerely, with*

*the exception of the Ten Commandments, As we say in Persia, goddam!, Yours until the next war, With prayers for your escape from Hell, Bon soir, old spitzbub'!, Et tu, Brute!, Yours in the name of the Archbishop, In hoc signo vinces, O tempora, O mores!, Salutations and a kiss on the ear, Sic transit gloria mundi!, Yours with an awful bellyache, Vive le roi!, With my shirt-tail in the breeze, To Hell with marinierte herring, Yours until the last Congressman is sober,* and *Over-the-river, sucker!*

"The letters themselves, generally from persons who have no more natural aptitude for humor than so many Socialists, avoid a direct statement of what they are driving at in preliminary disquisitions on the kind of liquor on sale in Columbus, Ohio, the looks of the chambermaid in the hotel in Elkhart, Indiana, and the resemblance of the half-tone of one that appeared in the local rotogravure section to Edgar A. Guest. These prefatory observations, couched in presumably very comical terms, are followed with an attempt at ingratiation that takes the form of allusions to the writers' wine-cellars and the hospitality of certain comely Creole girls in the neighborhood, together with droll speculations on one's possible relationship to a colored gentleman living in the writer's town who happens to enjoy a like surname. At this point, the correspondents interrupt themselves long enough to hint vaguely at

what they had in mind when they sat down to write. But, after the hint and by way of further installing themselves in one's good graces, they are promptly off again with some snappy notations of similes for forbidden words, a reference to an enclosed clipping from the local newspaper which contains a Rabelaisian typographical error, and the inside story of why Mrs. Snyder didn't kill her husband on the previous night, the latter illustrated with a pencil drawing. And when finally the real purpose of the letter begins to make itself apparent, one is so worn out that one has no sense left to cope with it. Such correspondents increase daily. Not only is one's personal mail chock full of them, but one's business and professional mail as well. The most uncommon thing that one encounters in these days is a simple letter, simply written, that says what it has to say in straight English, signs a name to it, and then quietly shuts up."

"What minds you men have!" observed Lorinda, with an adroitly concealed dryness.

"If we didn't know it already, we'd thank you," acquiesced Morton, Norton being at the moment busy pouring out two drinks.

Lorinda glanced inquisitively in the direction of the tabouret. To her relief and delight, she saw that the first bottle was now completely empty and that Norton was occupying himself with one of the

diluted ones. The rest of the evening would tell the story. Or at least it would provide the beginning of the story. If she could get the twain in even a half sober condition, she would be able to find out what was what so far as she was concerned.

"During the course of a recent *Schnapps* joust with my meritorious friend, Clarence Darrow," she heard Morton get under way, the while he quaffed the first of her craftily weakened hospitalities, "I made bold to suggest to him that he had successfully defended enough murderers in his life and that it was now up to him to round out a great career by committing a few murders himself. Graciously bequeathing an ear to my discharge of sapience, he observed that if I would prepare a list of those persons whose sudden demise would benefit the community, he would give the idea his studious consideration. Herewith, therefore, with an earnest prayer that he may not develop cold feet, I promulgate his list: (*a*) Any intelligent physician who allows the idiotic ethics of his profession to stand in the way of a true estimate and condemnation of an inferior fellow physician and who so endangers the health and life of one of the latter's patients; (*b*) Any juryman who acquits or convicts on the evidence alone, without taking into due and mature consideration the legal sleight-of-hand that contrives to put into the records testimony that should

not validly be there or keep out of them testimony that should validly be in them; (*c*) Any white man who sentimentally lynches a colored man for attacking a white woman of recognized easy morals; (*d*) Any vice-crusader whose wife laughs at him behind his back; (*e*) Any clergyman who gets his name into the papers more than once a month; and (*f*) Any reformed sinner over forty who seeks to reform men under forty and thus deny to them the pleasure of the sinning enjoyed by himself before his conversion."

And then Norton's ventilation: "The latest cure for all human ills, whether of mind or body—the climax to osteopathy, chiropractic, physicultopathy, Kneippism, Fletcherism, deep breathing, vegetarianism, anti-vaccination, Schlatterism, Christian Science, psychoanalysis, Prohibition, Fabianism, Kaffee-Hag and denicotinized cigarettes—bears the label Nacktkultur or, in its English and American incarnation, gymnosophy. According to this newest philosophical prophylactic, the trouble with the human race is that it wears clothes. Gymnosophy advocates, in brief, as an alleviation of all mortal distress, the practice of nudity of both sexes in common, for hygienic, social and aesthetic reasons. In Germany, where, like the dill pickle, it had its origin, it has already gained favor in various localities, particularly in those where the police are

diverted and kept busy by Wedekind plays and French spies, and in England and America, I am informed, there are at least a half dozen groups currently engaged in a devotion to it. In a pamphlet announcing the bible of the new order, the work of Maurice Parmelee, Ph. D., member of the Institut International de Sociologie, fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and member of the American Anthropological Association, the battle-cry is sounded something after this fashion: 'Mankind has become largely cut off from nature, and life is too artificial, much to the detriment of health and happiness. Thus man can little know and understand himself, his fellows and his natural environment, and this ignorance causes much of the stress and strain of human existence. This situation is strikingly exemplified in the concealment of the body, which hampers the rearing of the young and gives rise to unhealthy mental complexes. The new gymnosophy endeavors to regain what mankind has lost through civilization, without rejecting anything of human, social and cultural value. Nudity aids materially in bringing mankind closer to nature and in promoting more genuine and sincere relations between the sexes.'

"One shudders to think what the world will be like when Dr. Parmelee's great undressing scheme

is universally adopted, as, of course, it is bound to be. On the therapeutic and cultural advantages of the idea I hesitate to expatiate, but its more immediate results cause me some concern. As a professional student and critic of the arts, I rise to ask if it will be required of me that I contemplate Herb Hoover, Bill Borah and Bishop Manning in the altogether. If so, I state that I shall demand a passport to Liberia instanter. As an American citizen I am perfectly willing to be compelled to pay taxes, spend time serving on juries to free guilty bootleggers, write the necessary number of letters to the New York *Journal* proclaiming the martyrdom of the MM. Sacco and Vanzetti, and make my own gin; but this other I decline to do. In order to keep out of jail, I'll compromise on Aimée McPherson, but I draw the line somewhere. The day I have to look at Charlie Schwab and Otto Kahn in their birthday clothes, on that day shall I enlist in the Japanese secret service!"

At least, thought Lorinda, the speeches were getting a bit shorter. And she congratulated herself on her high sagacity in the matter of the tipples.

"What could be more absurd than all these recently lauded books which seek to prove that the greater part of the Bible is pure fiction?" demanded Morton. "Of course it is pure fiction; it is just that that gives it any sound reason for being! A book of

facts would have laid Christianity, like any other religion, in the dust within a hundred years or less; a book of beauty, with no more basis in fact than a British book of Hun atrocities, can alone contrive to keep any faith whole and alive. Platitude plus platitude! Religion, as the Dantziger observed, is essentially allegorical, like a poem, a painting or an absinthe drip. Fact has no more place in it than in music. It is an enchantment, a stimulating illusion, a bread pill, or it is nothing, and of no value. There is no more reason for Matthew xviii to be literal than there is for one of Chopin's Polish folk songs. Idealization, imagination and hocus-pocus are as valuable and necessary to any faith, even faith in a woman or a dog, as they are to heroic verse, sculpture or 'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean.' A true Bible would be as great an anomaly as a true Nibelungen Ring. It is my personal veneration of and faith in facts that prevent me, therefore, from being a religious man."

"In the English idea of sport for sport's sake, I take little stock," Norton meditated aloud. "If I play a game, I play it to win. A man may be a good sportsman if he does not mind losing all the time, but, by the same mark, he is worthless at the sport he enters into and, if he had any sense, would abandon it. The correlated notion that a very bad player gets just as much physical benefit out of a sport as a

very good one is also something I can't fathom. The very fact that he is a bad player proves that he doesn't; it shows, in the instance of the average game, that something is physically wrong with him, whether in the way of mind, muscle, heart or what not. The theory that if he keeps on being a bad player his physical ensemble will be automatically and mysteriously bettered is somewhat more soothing than true. The bad player, if he persists at sport, is generally found in due time moaning and groaning at some rest cure. The best sportsman is the man who plays an honorable game and plays it to the limit. He is out to demonstrate his superior skill and to lick his opponent. Any other view is sheer sentimental buncombe."

"I shall interest myself more greatly in the doctrine of general free speech," announced Morton, "when more than half a dozen men in any country seem to have something to say that is worth saying under any circumstances at any time or in any place."

"The argument most often advanced for the abolition of capital punishment is that it has not successfully deterred and doesn't deter persons from committing murder," announced Norton. "One might with equal logic therefore argue for the abolition of all forms of criminal punishment in that none so far devised has succeeded in deterring per-

sons from committing theft, perjury, arson, assault, bigamy, hold-ups, rape or anything else."

" 'Beautiful is youth, it never comes again,' goes the German saying," it was Morton's turn. "I beg leave to amend it by inserting *because* just after the comma. Youth is a nuisance. Only very old men become ga-ga lament that it is no longer theirs."

"The first flush of love disappears when a single bathroom begins to fail of its glamour," came from Norton.

Lorinda restrained her joy only with great difficulty. The addresses were getting shorter and shorter. The watered gin was on her side! Soon the geniuses would relapse into normal men—and her arrows were ready. At last she would be able to learn just where she truly stood in their estimation, not as a bartender but as a pretty and, she hoped, desirable young woman. She looked at the tabouret. The third of the debilitated bottles was now in service.

"Your opinion of women—?" Lorinda took courage and again ventured into the personal.

Pushing Norton aside, not without some effort, Morton lifted his voice: "I decline to be a realist where women are concerned. To enjoy women at all one must manufacture an illusion and envelop them with it, otherwise they would not be endurable. To that extent, at least, I am sufficiently real-

istic. Without this deceptive illusory chicane woman is found to be simply a third-rate man; with it, she is found to be charming, amusing, desirable, lovely. Why spoil a good time? Why be content with anything third-rate when you can so easily—in certain cases—metamorphose it into the first-rate? But, you ask, why fool yourself with women? I ask, in turn, why fool yourself with the whiskey you drink or the God you believe in? The temporary effect is good enough, and it all won't matter a damn after you are dead."

"Not too damned polite," thought Lorinda, "but, anyway, it is getting a little closer to the point."

"My preference as to women," Norton got in, shoving aside Morton by sheer physical strength, "is for good-looking ones, judiciously enough, and for unmarried ones, injudiciously enough." Lorinda promptly decided that it would be Norton, whether he knew it or not, who was destined for the rôle of her Abelard. "Married women should be taken on only at bad dinners," she heard him go on. Her face dropped. "They think they have to be entertaining and so they talk all the time. This gives one no time to do anything about the bad food and so safeguards the comfort and integrity of one's middle. For a good dinner your companion should be single and pretty. Pretty girls don't have to be

entertaining, don't try to be, and so give you ample time to eat your fill."

"But—" Lorinda interposed, determined to reduce the conversation to tacks.

"Now what's the trouble?" her guests wanted to know.

"What do you think of *me*, please?" she found herself almost shouting.

"You're a great girl!" both exclaimed. "Only something doesn't seem right about your liquor tonight."

"But aside from that?" she insisted.

"As we've said, you're a great girl, sweetmeat," replied Morton. "But you can never be the wife of a President of the United States. Whether by design or accident, the fact remains that, with one small exception, no girl with a fancy Christian name has ever diverted the eye of a President of the United States to the matrimonial altar. Save for a single Dolly, no woman with an overly ornamental or cutie label has thus far, in the history of the Republic, shared the throne. The thirty-four spouses of the thirty-one Presidents (one, Buchanan, remained a bachelor) have all borne plain, everyday first names. Two were Marthas, two were Marys, two were Abigails, two were Elizas, two were Ediths, two were Julias, two were Carolines, two were Ellens, and the rest were Sarahs, Louisas, Rachels,

Hannahs, Annas, Margarets, Janes, Lucys, Lettys, Franceses, Idas, Alices, Helens, Florences and Graces. A Lucretia, it is true, became Mrs. Garfield, but the President never called her that; from his courtship days she was always plain Lucy to him. In the general run of things it apparently has always been a bad day for the Gladyses, Maes, Violets, Daisys, Pearls, Hazels, Maybelles, Bonnies, Trixies, Dots, Lorindas and other such little sunshines."

Lorinda was ready to give up. But before she abandoned all hope, she determined to take one more chance. Morton and Norton were seated on the broad couch, their free arms around each other's shoulders.

"Could either of you love me?" She put the question as directly as a shot.

"Darling," replied Morton, "we certainly could."

"Yes, baby," added Norton, "we certainly could."

"Well, then, for Heaven's sake, why don't you show some signs of it!" she exclaimed.

"Now you're talking scandal," drily admonished Morton, swallowing half a glass and shaking a finger at her. "Now, little one, you're talking scandal! You had better be careful. You know that we live in an age of scandal gourmandizing. A nibbling at the personal lives of high and low is all-pervading. A great nosiness and snooping are upon us; even the

arts have taken on the aspect of the tabloids. Gentlemen with dusters and ladies and gentlemen with mirrors tell us that Prime Ministers are given periodically to a deplorably unstatesmanlike pruritus and that Presidents jump nervously whenever they pass a newsboy who bears a vague resemblance to them. Gentlemen with palettes present us with canvasses depicting 'The Last Supper,' showing the Twelve Apostles as pickled as so many Elks, and gray-haired grandmothers, slipping their false teeth back into place, deliver themselves of memoirs narrating how, on moonlit Summer nights long ago, now dead Confederate generals lured them behind the old family barn. Biographers of the new dispensation prove elaborately that Jean-Jacques Rousseau committed anatomical incendiarism only in fancy, that Napoleon never changed his lingerie, and that Kaiser Wilhelm suffered from an inferiority complex and, to sustain his self-esteem, ate French babies *en casserole*. Novelists, seized with the prevailing passion, apprise us of the news that Helen of Troy made Catherine of Russia look like an ice poultice, that Byron and Verdi suffered from lewd *spirochætæ*, and that George Washington and Aaron Burr were not always interested solely in the singing of the Black Pattis of their day. Even architects surmount their towering buildings with symbolic roosters.

"No person is safe from the proletarian chop-licking. Newspapers go so far in the direction of scandal that the libel line can be detected only with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass. The moment a woman in the public eye boards a steamer, it is hinted that she has a yen for one of the stewards and is going to Paris to divorce her husband, and that the latter in turn was, peculiarly enough, in his office on the second floor of the Singer Building on the same day that a pretty Flatbush stenographer jumped out of a window on the twenty-fifth. Any public official who stays up after midnight becomes the subject of much eye-winking, and any female revivalist weighing less than two hundred pounds is hinted to be given to esoteric didoes. The moment a man makes more than $100,000 out of oil, it is insinuated that he got six Senators under the influence of opium and used them for his nefarious purposes. The erstwhile respectable suitcase has been placed in the immoral category, and it has become worth one's reputation to be seen in Atlantic City with one's sister, if she happens to be a blonde. Grover Cleveland, we are allowed to imagine, was such a boozer that they haven't yet succeeded in polishing off all the glass rings on the White House mahogany; the late Woodrow, we read, was a stage-door John; the true story of Kitchener's death, we are told, was hushed up because a couple of Gaiety

girls were on the battleship at the time; and a certain President of France is reported to have met his death in a manner that was most embarrassing to those who found him. So watch your step, little apple-pie!"

"But I don't care about scandal!" Lorinda was almost in tears.

"Yes, we certainly could love you," murmured Norton.

"Sure thing," murmured Morton.

"Surest thing you know," mumbled Norton.

"We sure could," mumbled Morton.

"Yes, we sure could," breathed Norton.

"Most certainly," breathed Morton.

"Great girl," hummed Norton.

"Great girl," echoed Morton.

"Only something's not right about her liquor," babbled Norton.

"No, something's wrong about her liquor, but nice girl," gurgled Morton.

"Can't talk if liquor no good," droned Norton.

"No inspiration if liquor no good," droned Morton.

"Too bad. Nice girl."

"Too bad. Damned nice girl."

Their arms let go their hold.

Lorinda, crying bitterly, looked over at them.

They were fast asleep.

## CHAPTER VIII

WHITNEY VARICK need not be introduced to you. Among American poets he shared the pedestal only with Richard Brest. There was that quality in his lyrics and sonnets which, as one critic put it, could be found only in sunlight on soft pale blue velvet. It was a momentous day for Lorinda when she was introduced to him.

A year had gone by since her contretemps with Morton and Norton; a year and a number of months since Hemingham had come and, still theorizing over his fibula, departed. It had been a year of agitated concern for her; once during it she had even thought of marriage as a way out of illusion. The future, estimating it from the past, seemed so hopeless. She had spent several months in France, but the France she found tucked away in lovely little corners only heightened her unhappiness. For surely there was no sound of the Lohengrin march in the little waterfalls far down from Paris, no "Rock-a-Bye-Baby" in the rustle of the twilight leaves in those still and heart-gripping forests. There was only the melody, under the silver Troyon skies by day and the starlit Cachoud skies by night, of faint

and lazy and hintful waltzes, whispering to the lovers of an unreal world. She had tried Germany, down Partenkirchen way toward the Tyrol, but that, too, had only added to her psychical malaise. She had even tried England, but found no peace there, for the green of Devonshire and the gray of Sussex had played their vagrant tunes into her vagrant imagination. Beauty, the sort of beauty that is half adventure, half homesickness, inevitably propels a girl, with its cat-o'-nine-tails of fancy, into that pleasurable melancholy whereof thought of matrimony is small part.

It was on the *Aquitania*, homeward bound, in the starboard palm garden at tea, that chance brought Whitney Varick into Lorinda's life. Of their introduction, of their first few commonplaces, she remembered little. All that she could remember, afterward, was that he was very handsome in his rather delicate way and—she was that kind of girl—that his fingers were long and slender. "Will you have tea, or would you rather have a cocktail?" she had asked him. He preferred tea; he never drank, he said; and, reflecting upon the dreadful Morton and Norton, her heart pattered with potential encouragement. "Do you believe in the social importance of the length of the fibula, or are you as unaffectedly simple as—well, as I am?" she had asked him over the last of the cinnamon toast, and

he had wanted to know what fibula meant. Her heart, recollecting the odious Hemingham, now almost rattled its joy. "And what is more," she had heard him say, "I'd rather just look at you and say nothing. I don't believe that one should talk of dreams." She thought of the hours upon hours of bad Sam Butler, worse Rochefoucauld and much worse Nietzsche that she had been forced to listen to in the company of Hemingham, Morton and Norton, and heaved a sigh of relief. Here at last was her hero of heroes, her knight of knights! Here, and finally this time, was the literary mate of her great romance. The others had been legends, hoaxes, figments of her deluded inexperience.

The sea days and nights with Varick, under sunshine that was like exploded ginger-ale and under a moon that swam in the waters like some mermaid's mislaid ivory cameo, were days and nights of pure wonder to her. There was nothing about this man that she did not like; everything about him, his point of view, his manner of expression, his philosophy of life and of people and of places, his demeanor, pleased her immeasurably. In the books of his, charmingly inscribed, that he sent to her cabin, she found further testimonials to his attractiveness of mind and attitude. There was, for example, in his work, "The Pragmatism of the Useless," this that deeply appealed to her:

"From time to time I have commented upon the more lamentable characteristics of our fellow Americans, to the loud and, I regret to report, sometimes vituperative displeasure of certain of the more recently naturalized patriots. So loud and vituperative has lately this displeasure been, indeed, that its volume has not been matched since the day that I published a treatise pointing out the unexcelled preëminence of Americans and America in a number of obvious directions. I therefore often conclude that perhaps the most effectual way to go about criticizing our co-citizens and the idiosyncrasies of their conduct may be to set forth their good points, so get them angry and then arrive at the truth about them through their own irritated denials and automatic self-analyses. The moment you flatter a man, he psychically pulls off his boots and shows his bare Achilles heel. Denounce him and he keeps his boots on with a view to a reciprocatory kick.

"Here, however, I fear that I am concerned less with one of our brother's good points than with one of his dubious ones. I allude to his encompassing veneration of practicability and to his complete subservience to the doctrine of does-it-work? and is-there-any-real-use-to-it? It is this veneration and this subservience that have undoubtedly made the American what he is: the world's money-bags, the

financial field-general, but it is this same veneration and subservience that have also undoubtedly made him the most prosaic and least appealing of fellows. Of all men, the American as an individual is most greatly lacking in glamour and romance, and for the simple reason that he is himself skittish of glamour and romance. He is shy of them to the point of downright fear; they and all that they imply and represent are excessively questionable in his eyes and are to be avoided. In this attitude we have, of course, the obvious mark of a *nouveau* and uncertain people. The worship of practicability and atheism as to the beauty of the impracticable are always attributes of men still psychically in the peasant state. The charm of the relatively useless is the prerogative of an aristocracy.

"Distrust, contempt and even hatred of the arts, distrust, contempt and even ribaldry for the frolicsome fireworks of romantic passion, impatience running to indignation over Continental ease and irony and the gentlemanly leisureliness of life—these are familiar enough American phenomena. The emotions must be flogged into routine channels; the heart must be kept strictly in place underneath its two-dollar shirt; the eye must be kept straight ahead that it may not be diverted from Success, Respectability, Duty and all the other stereotyped, capitalized goals of prosperity, secur-

ity and public esteem. There must be censors alert to press the lid on bold and vagrant and beautiful letters, and a voracious yellow press to hold up to ridicule and obloquy any citizen who permits his emotions to step out of line for even a moment, and policemen to collar scoundrels who flirt with pretty women on the streets, and hysterical evangelists to warn against life's agreeable little follies, and the howling of psalm singers to drown out the hurdy-gurdies of homesick Italians and the dancing of little alien tenement girls, and motor-cycle police to spy on parked Chryslers after dark, and Sunday laws, Monday laws and Tuesday laws, and God knows what else to make life humdrum in the holy name of what is called Respectability. If England is a nation of shopkeepers, we in turn are a nation of keepers of our neighbor's soul. He may, if we don't watch him, have too good a time and be happy. He must be kept, at all costs, a routine member of the community, a fellow his employer can trust not to steal an extra five minutes at lunch time, a decent citizen—in short, a Success.

"About twenty years ago, in an address to the student body of one of our great American universities at Commencement time, a fine old American scholar and gentleman named Crane, now gone to the grave, spoke these words:

" 'Nor am I willing to overlook those influences

which have touched your emotional nature and, I firmly believe, contributed largely to your intellectual growth. The pictures of hill and dell, of lake and waterfall will be with you sleeping and waking, and the strains of remembered music and the visions of storied glass will evoke noble thoughts and nerve you to heroic deeds. For all these things, and how many more!, you are indebted to your alma mater. It is a debt you can never hope to repay, but for which you can be everlasting grateful.

" 'Many years ago, I found in an old Italian book an apologue which may appropriately end these random thoughts:

There was once a Queen of the Isles called Happy, fair and of wondrous aspect, adorned with precious garments and ever young. She never wished to wed, but was content to be admired and loved. To those who loved her most she gave the greatest rewards, and to the others according to their affection. But of all she made trial in this wise. When each came before her as he was summoned, she touched him with a wand and dismissed him from her presence. When they had left the palace of the Queen they straightway fell asleep and slumbered until she had them awakened. Then they appeared before her again and each had his dream written on his brow so that the Queen could easily read it. And those who had dreamed of hunting and fishing, of horses and wild beasts and forests, she drove away to pass their waking hours with the beasts of which they had dreamed; for if they had loved her, she said, they would sometimes have dreamed of her.

Those others who had dreamed of merchandise, or of ruling their families, or of the State or like things, unmindful of the Queen, she made merchants and statesmen, loading them with cares and heavy thoughts.

But those who had dreamed of her she kept with her in her court, and reasoned with them amid the sound of sweet music and rejoicings of infinite content.

" 'So shall it be with you. Your alma mater will shower upon you honors and wealth. She will load you with the cares of the State and the burdens of trade. But forget her not, even in your dreams, for to those who are true to their first love she will open wide her pleasant court and grant a respite to the weary toiler amid these lovely scenes where he has passed his happy youth.'

"How many out of the one hundred and twenty millions of Americans today, I wonder, can understand what he meant? And how many, understanding or not understanding, can still check the impulse to exclaim, 'Fiddlesticks!' "

And in his "Poets and Lovers In Hiding," there were what seemed to her the wisest words on George Bernard Shaw that she had read:

"The plays of Shaw, all of them, age badly. The one and only thing that today seems fresh and vital about them and that will probably still seem fresh and vital in future years is their love element, that is, their sentimental passages and their love scenes. I begin to believe that Shaw's plays will live, if at all, for just two reasons: first, purely as curiosities of the Twentieth Century dialectic drama, much as the plays of, say, Alfred de Vigny, equally regardless of lasting merit, persist as curiosities of Nineteenth Century romantic drama, as those of Steele or Rowe persist as curiosities of Eighteenth

Century machinal drama, or as those of some writer like Chapman persist as curiosities of Seventeenth Century historical; and secondly, and much more likely, for the enduring excellence and fine magnetism of their love scenes. As plays, most of them will be as dead as door-nails, but as curios and symbols of a specific period they may conceivably remain as piquant as so many horsehair sofas, cigar-store Indians and Nathaniel P. Willis. Only their sentimental scenes will remain ever-green, and if they are revived for our grandchildren, save as dusty freaks, it will be their sentimental scenes and their sentimental scenes alone that will still bequeath a semblance of life to them.

"Shaw would doubtless be disgusted to conceive of himself as being remembered by future generations not as a thinker and an idea-fountain but as a lover, yet that is the way I feel pretty sure he will be remembered. For the truth is that as thinker, at least so far as the drama is concerned, he doesn't grade so very much higher than his pet, Brieux, while as a lover, or at least as a writer of tremulant *violinata* dramatic scenes, he stands head and shoulders above every other Anglo-Saxon writing plays in our time. Shaw is the great lover in modern Anglo-Saxon dramatic literature. And long after his plays have been smiled out of countenance for the staleness and platitudinousness of their philosophical

japery, their sentimental passages will still retain the power to charm and move and pleasurably enrapture theatre audiences.

"Already this early the elaborate medical strictures of 'The Doctor's Dilemma' have taken on a cobwebbed air and ring excessively flat. But the sentimental passages of the play are as fascinating and valid as they were twenty years ago. Shaw, the lover, the sentimentalist, lives where Shaw, the jester, the transient bubble-pricker, lies on the theatrical death-bed. It is the Shaw of Dubedat and Mrs. Dubedat in their enchanted moments, not the Shaw of Cullen, Ridgeon, Walpole and Bonington in their sardonic, who holds the interest of latter-day audiences. It is Shaw speaking through the mouth of the dying Louis, his wife's arms holding him tenderly close, that audiences remember, not the Shaw of ancient medical gags and pathological wheezes. 'Then you must always wear beautiful dresses and splendid magic jewels. Think of all the wonderful pictures I shall never paint. . . . Well, you must be transfigured with all the beauty of those pictures. Men must get such dreams from seeing you as they never could get from any daubing with paints and brushes. Painters must paint you as they never painted any mortal woman before. There must be a great tradition of beauty, a great atmosphere of wonder and romance. That is what men

must always think of when they think of me. That is the sort of immortality I want. There are lots of things you don't understand that every woman in the street understands, but you can understand that and do it as nobody else can. Promise me that immortality. Promise me you will not make a little hell of crêpe and crying and undertaker's horrors and withering flowers and all that vulgar rubbish. . . . I'm in Heaven, immortal in the heart of my beautiful Jennifer!'

"And what continues similarly to linger in the memory in the instance of other Shaw plays? Is it the comic opera paradoxes of 'Captain Brassbound's Conversion' or such passages as Brassbound's proposal of marriage to Cicely—and the end with Cicely in strange ecstasy crying, 'Oh farewell. With my heart's deepest feeling, farewell, farewell,' and Brassbound, 'With my heart's noblest honor and triumph, farewell!' Above the labored irony of 'The Devil's Disciple' is not the element in the play that persists in the recollection the charming sentimental counterpoint of Judith and Richard, in particular that in the third act? It is pretty well agreed by all critics, even those given to a superior admiration of Shaw's satirical, humorous and social purgative gifts, that the particular play of his which in all likelihood has about it the greatest promise of enduring life is 'Candida'—and 'Candida' is surely

chiefly noteworthy for the depth and beauty of its sentiment. If there is a finer sentimental play in the whole range of modern drama, its name is a stranger to me. Consider, for example, the rich tenderness of such speeches as Morell's, 'You are my wife, my mother, my sisters; you are the sum of all loving care to me,' and Candida's to Marchbanks at the play's conclusion, the one beginning, 'Now I want you to look at this boy here—my boy—spoiled from his cradle.' Or Morell's, spoken with proud humility, 'I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty of purpose for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer a woman.' Or Candida's, 'And you, Eugene? What do you offer?' —with the poet's passionate, 'My weakness! My desolation! My heart's need!' There's writing for you! . . . And what of Caesar's magnificent parting from Cleopatra with its, 'Come, Cleopatra: forgive me and bid me farewell, and I will send you a man, Roman from head to heel and Roman of the noblest; not old and ripe for the knife, not lean in the arms and cold in the heart, not hiding a bald head under his conqueror's laurels, not stooped with the weight of the world on his shoulders, but brisk and fresh, strong and young, hoping in the morning, fighting in the day, and revelling in the evening.

Will you take such an one in exchange for Caesar?' And then the palpitating little one's, 'His name, his name?', and Caesar's quiet, 'Shall it be Mark Antony?' Or of Julia in 'The Philanderer' and her 'I am too miserable to argue—to think. I only know that I love you'? Or of Bashville's speeches to Lydia? What will be left in days to come—what, indeed, is left now—of such a play as, say, 'Mrs. Warren's Profession' save the madam's alcoholic 'story of her life'?

"It is a poor critic who can't see under the top layers of the superficial Shavian bellicosity and detect there the really great sentimentalist, a sentimentalist of purest dye yet blessed with the faculty of making commonplace sentiment take on an air of dignity and poetry and beauty. That Shaw is, for all his pretence to the contrary, a sentimental man at heart is easily to be discovered from even a cursory study of his writings. This pretence of his is successful in fooling only such persons as take too seriously such of his obviously posturing and forced animadversions on the discomforts of the divine passion as Tanner's, 'I got up a love affair with her, and we met one night in the garden and walked about very uncomfortably with our arms around one another,' etc., and the 'Back to Methuselah' Maiden's *reprise*, 'Do you suppose I can spend centuries . . . lying about with your arms round me,

which is really neither comfortable nor convenient' —or the same character's 'We used to think it would be nice to sleep in one another's arms, but we never could go to sleep because our weight stopped our circulations just above the elbows.' But these nose-fingerings are not the man, for the man himself is a romantic of romantics in his soul and as greatly given to gyneolatry and a faith in Strephon and Chloe, for all his attempt to conceal the fact, as any James M. Barrie or A. A. Milne. 'No man,' he says through Tanner, 'is a match for a woman, except with a poker and a pair of hobnailed boots. Not always even then.' One cannot, true enough, always justly judge and appraise the man behind the dramatist from the speeches he puts into the mouths of his male characters, for he often uses those characters to hide his ingrained attitude and point of view and to give a show in which he makes himself appear in other than his true philosophical and personal light. But one can generally pretty well judge the man behind the playwright from the speeches he puts into the mouths of his women characters, for then he is more greatly off guard and betrays himself. It is significant to note, in this regard, the speeches that Shaw gives to his women. What his women say so *amorosamente*, so tenderly, so feelingly and so convincingly is what he himself thinketh in his heart.

And the poet that lies in that heart is the Shaw that will live long after the philosophical gag-man that lies in his head will have gone to his Maker."

Many of Varick's observations, such as "The end of knowledge is merely a bumptious unhappiness" and "Symbolism is the child of poetic courage and intellectual cowardice," continued to sing in her ears. His views of France and of Europe were her own views, she concluded after reading such passages as the following in his "Notebook of Travel":

§ 1

It is an old story that the American traveler has ruined Europe for many of his more discriminating fellow countrymen. But like many another old story, such as Jonah and the whale and Christian Science, its integrity is open to doubt. It is true that the traveling American, the most offensive and unhousebroken migratory animal known to zoölogy, has left his mark upon a number of European places and has sent the quiet charm of them galloping, but the places in question are relatively few, after all, and even so have seldom been those that have appealed to that other type of American who has some measure of taste, dignity and gentle understanding.

Take even Paris. Of all Continental cities, it is

said to have been the most greatly spoiled by the American. While it is perfectly true that some sections of Paris have been thus spoiled beyond redemption, certain of those sections are not only negligible but, as a matter of fact, are not and never were essentially or integrally Parisian. When you hear that the American has spoiled Paris, what your informant usually means is that the American has infested and stamped with his blemishing personality the Place Vendôme hotels, the Madrid and Pré Catelan restaurants, the Moulin Rouge and Folies-Bergère music halls, one or two of the terrace cafés in the Latin Quarter, the dance halls of the Montmartre district, the Florida and Perroquet jazz restaurants and other such places that the French themselves avoid as they avoid Poland water, and not only the French but all visiting Americans of any discrimination whatsoever. Most of such institutions are not French at all, but simply American transplanted, and the only times that you will find psychically reputable Americans in them are when the latter, in a cynical mood, go around to watch their dubious fellow countrymen making a show of themselves and disgusting all decent Frenchmen.

The Paris of the Parisians, on the other hand, is still the uncontaminated and charming Paris that it has always been. That Paris simply does not ap-

peal to the overdressed and drinking American and he consequently avoids it. In it you will see no American bars; you will hear no American jazz; you will find no talk of golf and the stock market; you will see no fat women lighted up with diamonds. And, what is more, the Paris I allude to is more than a good two-thirds of the city; the American devastation is confined, at most, to the other third. What is true of Paris is even truer of France as a whole. Save for a few otherwise lovely little places in the South, the obvious Deauvilles and Touquets and the ritualistic sight-spots, familiar enough for anyone to avoid them, the American influence is nowhere discernible. Now and again, of course, some migratory American, accompanied by his wife or a couple of fellow golf players, invades the beauty and silence of a hidden countryside and calls loudly for a Bronx or a Sidecar, but he is soon again on his way and all becomes as tranquil as before.

Germany, Austria, England—even Italy—have no more been made unpleasant for the better sort of American traveler, although Italy shows some sorry wounds. The cheap American avoids England for the simple reason that it is, very properly, inhospitable to him and he has a bad time there. He remains in London a few days, buys a suit of clothes and some neckties, sees an American musical

show or play, takes a look at the Thames at Maidenhead, and then makes a bee-line for Paris. Of England outside of London he knows nothing. That England, so infinitely lovely, is a stranger to him and hence a source of heartsease and contentment to the American of the emerged tenth. Germany and Austria attract a few of our cloak and suit dealers suffering from intestinal trouble and seeking rehabilitation at one or another of the cures, together with a quota of professional sightseers, but the American tourist in the mass skirts them. Italy, like France, gets him in the largest numbers. But, just as he confines himself in France to what are largely the routine places and districts, so in Italy does he fortunately remain aloof from the beautiful byways and confine himself to the picture postcard localities. Venice, of course, is now indistinguishable from Atlantic City, and Rome and Florence may during certain periods of the year closely resemble Saturday night at Guffanti's, but there is another Italy that remains quite as Italian as it was born.

§ 2

The much discussed hostility of the French to American visitors seems to have disappeared almost entirely. What remains of it is confined to the overmoneyed, loud and offensive Americans,

and with ample justification. The only country in which there is a real hostility to and hatred of the better class of Americans is the United States.

§ 3

The acidulous conflict engendered by the now celebrated inscription at Louvain—translating the Latin, "Destroyed by German fury (or hate); restored by American generosity (or gift)"—might readily have been avoided had the persons in charge had the sense to hire a competent professional writer to edit the job for them. This leaving of inscriptions to architects, priests, politicians and whatnot always makes for dissatisfaction and trouble; such gentlemen, whatever their virtuosity in other directions, are generally not qualified in the literary graces. Any professional writer or editor might easily have pointed the way out of the impasse and difficulty and might have rid the inscription of the bitterness attaching to the words *fury* or *hate* and of the bumptiousness attaching to the words *generosity* or *gift*. For example, what would have been more delicate and more graceful than some such amendment as "Destroyed by German forgetfulness; restored by American memory"?

§ 4

Most American cities are defaced and made hideous by their so-called civic improvement organizations. The idea of the latter seems to be to cut down a lot of beautiful trees and put up a meretricious statue. The Europeans, when they wish to improve their cities, haven't yet arrived at the point where they pull down their ugly statues and grow trees in their places, but they at least retain the sagacity to leave what trees they have alone.

§ 5

I find myself unable to join in the common sneer at the many young American boys and girls who have taken up living on the Left Bank, there to pursue what artistic talents they may or may not possess. It seems to me that the majority of them have a great deal of sense. They can live very much more cheaply and with ten times more comfort and charm than they possibly could over here; they are among a people who sympathize with their ambitions, however often despairful, and who understand their hopes and dreams; they have about them quiet in which to work; they can happily and within their means amuse themselves when that

work is done for the day. There may be fools among them, but even the fools are better off than they would be in America. The others, even if many of them are talentless, are at least giving what small share of artistic competence they have a better ground in which to flourish than they could find three thousand miles to the West. And what is true of the Left Bank is even truer of other sections of France.

§ 6

He is seventy-two years old. His name is Marcel and he has been in that same forest restaurant since a young man. "You have never married?" I asked him. "No," he answered and sadly shook his head. "You must be lonely in these, your old years," I ventured. "No," he said gently, and his voice was tender, "I have my children."

* * * * *

Lorinda, in short, found in Varick all that her romantic heart and appreciative mind had been—thus far so futilely—seeking.

Only one thing disturbed her and gave her pause. Surely she had indicated, very plainly, to him that she was more than merely attracted to him and surely he had indicated in turn, and equally plainly, that he was more than merely attracted to her.

Why then, under the stars and moons of those soft Atlantic nights, with the world encircling them with its innuendo, had he never even tried to put his arms around her, never even made a move to kiss her? He spoke to her as no man had ever spoken before—with the voice of intelligent beauty. But, with Nantucket Light already on the western horizon, Lorinda found herself again apprehensive and wondering.

## CHAPTER IX

A TELEPHONE call from Varick in the late afternoon after the day of their landing, however, brought a sudden renaissance to Lorinda's hopes. "I must see you!" he cried. "When?"

The half hour it took him to get to Lorinda's apartment was, to Lorinda, at least fifteen minutes lost.

"I have been thinking about us," said Varick as soon as he had finished the gentle kiss upon her hand, "and I conclude that we are delightfully suited to each other, dear lady, in many respects. We have the same thoughts on so many subjects. We both worship the beautiful. We both are foes to ugliness in its every form. We both—" he paused, and Lorinda waited breathlessly— "we both are prepared for that rarest and loveliest of all things on earth, romantic love."

Could she believe her ears? Could what she had so long sought be now within her grasp? But she must move slowly; there was no need this time for her desperately direct technique—alas, so hapless—to which she had been driven on the previous lamentable occasions. Triumph loomed at last be-

fore her; it must be safeguarded. This time, all must be victoriously lost, including her honor.

"Come," she heard Varick say; "come sit by me that I may speak to you—for words must thus early tell what is in my mind and heart so that later, silent, we may understand each other and in that silence live our articulate dreams."

"Your words, unlike the words of certain other writers I have known, are beautiful," Lorinda purred. "You, unlike so many of them, speak the way you write. I am glad."

"Dear lady, please do not say that! I have always observed that it is only bad writers who speak the way they write."

Varick's lips, pressed again to her hand, radioed their gentle warmth through her.

"Love is to the poet the one and only glamourous and important thing in the world," Varick began. "There are few poets in America—real poets of the emotion, I mean, not men who pass themselves off as poets by writing voluminous rhymed treatises on operatic characters, anti-slavery leaders and the Chicago stock-yards—and as a consequence love has been so insufficiently and ineloquently interpreted to the American that he knows nothing more about it than a schoolboy or a vulgar alley-cat. American love is ridiculous, even in the high places. Consider the revelations in the instance of

that book written by the Britton woman about Harding. It was, you will recall, argued against the publication of the book, first, that, even if wholly true, it was in deplorable taste; second, that a President of the United States, however indiscreet, should, in the higher interests of the State, be held sacrosanct in such cases; third, that—but I need not enumerate; the objections were sufficiently typical to be recognizable. What is more, they were also uniformly idiotic. The book in question was in no more deplorable taste than, say, Sainte-Beuve's 'Mes Poisons,' yet there have been few protests against the latter. It was, further, no more justly to be condemned for casting reflections on a President of the United States—and a very inferior one, to boot—than would be the several recent lives of Washington, the greatest President the nation has had. Objection to the book on these grounds and on the others that they connote were essentially dubious, and plainly hollow. There was just one sound objection that might have been made against the book and that—brushing aside its spurious posture as a plea for more merciful laws in relation to illegitimacy—was that it offered itself as a great love story and contrived only to be a very cheap and very shoddy one. Harding may or may not have been an estimable man in other ways, but one thing is certain and that is that he was a dull and

unimaginative lover. Nor, forgetting momentarily my rôle of gallant and remembering only my rôle as critic, does Miss Britton seem to have been any better. To offer to the public a book recounting the mewings, purrings and back-fence carnality of such a couple, and at a price for which the public might buy the 'Divina Commedia,' 'The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini' or even 'The Life of Gaby Deslys,' is a leap far beyond the reasonable. Poor Harding! He deserved what he got. Yet he did nothing that George Washington didn't do, and neither of them did anything that Napoleon Bonaparte didn't do half a dozen times."

"Indeed, I agree with you!" Lorinda proclaimed, with obvious enthusiasm.

"The American is a poor lover," reiterated Varick. "It is significant to note in this connection that, in the more sophisticated strata of American life, the man named by the husband as co-respondent is generally found to be one of at least partly alien blood. In the presence of a romantic situation or a romantic scene, the American always believes that it is necessary for him, as a testimonial to his manliness, to be humorous."

"You are not an American?" inquired Lorinda with a demure but unmistakable, if deftly suppressed, anticipation.

"My great-grandmother on my father's side," announced Varick proudly, "was Swedish."

Lorinda found herself repeating that she was glad. She would have been happier and would have been more greatly encouraged, however, by a somewhat closer trace of genealogical corruption, but even a great-grandmother's implied paganism was something.

"Take the question of divorce, dear lady," her *vis-à-vis* expounded. "In a report made not long ago to the House of Bishops of the Episcopal convention by the Right Hon. Herman Page, of Michigan, chairman of the joint commission that has applied itself to a study of the problem for several years, the recommendation was made that normal schools, colleges, universities and seminaries be requested to offer greater instruction on the subject of marriage and human relationships by way of overcoming the seriousness of the divorce situation in the United States. 'What is needed,' the report went on to state, 'is the same thorough study and diagnosis that are characteristic of all good engineering and medical work today.' With the highest regard for the eminent dominie, with due appreciation of the amenities and as one pewholder to another, I take his ear delicately in my fingers and whisper into it: Nonsense! All the instruction, study and diagnosis of marriage and hu-

man relationships put on tap in all the schools from Seattle to Cape Cod and from Chicago to the Gulf will not help matters a jot. And the same thorough study and diagnosis that are characteristic of all good engineering and medical work, in our friend's phrase, will help a heap less. Divorces are the result not of misunderstanding so often as they are the result of too complete and too intimate understanding. The way to prevent divorce is not to teach boys and girls how to understand girls and boys but to teach them the compelling, persuasive illusion of the stimulating and mysterious unknown. Divorce was little heard of in the age of chivalry and roses. It flourishes today in an age of sex tomes and sex moving pictures, popular treatises on anatomy, flapper sophistication and cheap oysters.

"Illusion—beautiful illusion," he concluded, "that is what the world needs! There is, there can be, no perfect love without it. And our love must be a perfect love."

Just what was he driving at? Lorinda did not entirely relish the way the wind was blowing. What was this about marriage and divorce—marriage in particular? Too much of the tone of "Busslied" was insinuating itself into his conversation. She would take the bull by the horns.

"You speak of marriage," she said. "Surely that

marriage is the end of illusion is the platitude of platitudes."

"It is the end of illusion," Varick agreed, to her welcome relief. "And do you know why?"

Lorinda did, naturally enough, but let him go on.

"In this age of gossip and scandal it has come to be an accepted fact that the breaking up of at least nine-tenths of marriages is due to *outside* fooling around by one or another of the parties to the marriage. For one such marriage that disintegrates for that reason, I hazard the guess that there are a dozen that go to pieces because of *indoor* difficulties on the part of the married couples themselves. What are these difficulties? They are the difficulties bred not of physical intimacy, as most persons argue, but, more importantly, of emotional intimacy. A wife may delight in the sex intimacy of her husband—and vice versa—for many years, but in the meantime she or he is hard put to it to live with his or her extra-boudoir emotions. A married couple that fights in bed is as rare as a married couple that does not fight at the dinner-table. Illusion, the *sine qua non* of a male and female relationship that endures, has nothing to do with sex. A man and woman are completely happy in sex only when they have sagaciously rid themselves of illusion, when they are as realistic, on the woman's side, as Margaret of Navarre and, on the man's, as Balzac.

But sex, for all our modern novelists who write like castrated longshoremen, plays very little part in any lasting relationship—perhaps, if exact statistics were available, not more than two or three hours out of a week's one hundred and sixty-eight. That, incidentally, is why a young boy and girl, to whom sex is relatively new and novel, tire of each other so quickly after they have indulged themselves and seek illusion in the eyes and hearts of other girls and boys.

"All these arguments about the failure of marriage do not convince me, though I surely believe that it is a failure. Take, for example, what they say about the modern apartment house. The apartment house is frequently charged with breaking up the old spirit of home life in our larger cities and contributing toward marital *débâcle*. The idea strikes me as foolish. The notion, commonly promulgated, that a wife who orders dinner up from the restaurant, or gets it at the delicatessen around the corner, or is able quickly to prepare it with newfangled mechanical appliances is bound for some occult reason to be a less meritorious and gradually less contented and happy spouse than the one who stands half a day over a sweltering stove does not penetrate too smoothly into my logical centres. The wife who washes dishes may contribute to keeping her husband's and children's

home intact—in fact, she generally does—but it is a home sordid, rebellious and miserable. The so-called old home life was often largely a sentimental legend, cherished by outsiders. Its disappearance has done more to argue for the success of marriage, relatively speaking, than anything else one can think of. But, success or failure, marriage does not interest me. A poet married is the equivalent of a bachelor down with pericerebritis."

Lorinda breathed more easily. At least marriage was not in Varick's mind. But there was something in what he had said that bothered her even more.

"Yet mayn't sex be thrilling and lovely even though, as you contend, it be rid of illusion?" she asked concernedly, and waited, not without qualm, for his reply.

He lighted a cigarette. Varick's lighting a cigarette, Lorinda had observed, was never an encouraging omen. There was that about it which suggested the ambiguous and uncertain G. K. Chesterton's use of semi-colons.

"Sex," Varick blew the word languidly through a smoke-ring, "is most thrilling and beautiful only when it is ugliest. I am not making cheap epigrams, believe me, dear lady. As I said before, sex—in actual life—touches the heavens only when it simultaneously touches the gutter and the mud. Love and sex are two different things, as different

as a violin and a bass-drum, though both may be in the same orchestra and play their share in the same melody. In the arts, it has taken sex in its ugliest phases to produce the most thrilling and beautiful masterpieces—like 'Œdipus,' 'Phedre,' 'The Cenci' and 'La Citta Morte' in drama, 'Die Walküre' in opera, 'Jupiter and Io' and 'Leda' in painting. One of Shakespeare's most beautiful works deals with the passionate love of a black man for a white girl, and another with the incestuous concupiscence of a man for his brother's widow. Among the greatest novels, from Fielding and Gautier to Proust, you'll find sex at its foulest converted into artistic majesty."

Lorinda tried vainly to think of something to say.

"Why is it," Varick went on, "that none of our later American writers has ever written a good novel dealing with love? Very simply, because none of them knows anything about love, or at best, very little. That is the reason why the only good straight love stories produced in America are very short stories—things like Lee Pape's 'Little Girl' or Ruth Suckow's 'Just Him and Her' or Edwin Lefevre's 'Without End.' All that the American knows about love may readily be put into twenty-five hundred or even fewer words. We have had some pretty fair sex novels, but almost anybody

can write a pretty fair sex novel. I have read some good ones by men who had never before lifted a pen—Steele's 'One Man,' for example. But it takes a lover to write a novel of love, even before it takes a writer. How many exceptions to that rule can you think of in the great literature of love? Our American novelists who try to write of love haven't anything of the lover in them. They can write convincingly enough of the love of farmhands, mill superintendents, mining engineers, cowboys, yokels and tradesmen, but there they are brought by natural personal limitations to a halt. Their love is simply a theme song for a moving picture, interrupted periodically by forced ironic toots. I ask you, dear lady, to stop a moment and think. What American novelist can you remotely imagine as being loved by a Ninon de l'Enclos or de Maintenon—or even a George Sand or Countess d'Agoult?"

Varick's cigarette had gone out. Lorinda, having during his address at last thought up exactly what to say was on the point of saying it when, as if fearfully detecting her intention, Varick lighted another.

## CHAPTER X

NOR did Lorinda get the proper opportunity to say what she had thought to say on the three following evenings. Marriage was providentially not in Varick's mind; romance providentially was. Accordingly, the one word that dinned itself into Lorinda's thoughts was *why? why? why?* Why did he not take her close to him? Why did he not act out his philosophy? Why did he not take her for his and her beautiful, rapturous own? What was holding him back? Surely not she, for she spelled invitation. And she was, when she willed, an excellent speller. She abandoned her quondam air of subtle watchful waiting; she abandoned her erstwhile hypothetical indifference; she made her lips take on the provocative Rossetti appearance of always being on the point of saying *won't you?*; she so adjusted her hair-pins that her lovely Rossetti hair periodically tumbled down—to her feigned impatience and annoyance; she neat-handedly let him catch her looking admiringly out of the corner of her eye at him; she employed sudden significant silences to what should have been good effect; she allowed herself to brush against him with the timid

apprehension of that bathing girl in Corot's "Îles Borromées." In fact, when she was not patterning herself after Rossetti, she was Coroting herself with an unmistakable virtuosity, alternating her mood between the still gladness of "Un Matin" and the still sadness of "Le Soir." Corot, Lorinda's sagacity advised her, painted desirable women in terms of beautiful scenery—it was his ironic form of artistic misogyny; unlike Rousseau or Daubigny there was always a suggestion of sex in his landscapes. But Varick, charming, gracious and potentially her prince of lovers, yet continued to remain romantic *in vacuo.*

He would seat himself at the piano and play to her, but, though he played beautifully, his shortest performance took on in her restless impatience the length of Tschaikowski's Sonata in G. She thought of herself, now, and of these literary lights whom she had met, in terms of that sonata: of the vigorous promise, with its blending of Chopin, in the beginning; of the seeming and hintful simplicity of what was to come next in the E minor andante; of the insinuation of waggish humor in the scherzo; and—then—of the empty noise of the finale. A man, she meditated, should never play the piano before an affair with a woman, but afterward. That is, a man who was not a professional musician, and among professional musicians it seemed to her

that only a violinist could possibly be conceived of as a lover. Imagine, she thought, a 'cello player as a lover, or a tuba player, or a talented cornetist, or a trombone or flute player. True enough, violinists, Kreisler excepted—and he was getting too far on in years—were banal clowns with a pose of professional melancholy about them that made them comic in her eyes, but the idea of them, at least, was sentimentally possible. The trouble with pianists was that one could never take one's refractory eye off their legs and feet when they were working the pedals and that, however conciliating their playing was, the spectacle of the nether monkey-shines robbed them of a certain dignity. All pianos, Lorinda concluded, should have screens or drapes around their bottoms. It was one thing to listen to fingers evoking beautiful music and another to look simultaneously at legs and feet—even Paderewski's —apparently stepping every other moment on the gas.

"Just as the American knows nothing of love," she heard Varick say, "so does he know nothing of music—of the heart and soul of music, that is. The European regards music as a pleasure, a joy; the American looks upon it as a course in education. Go to a symphony concert in Europe and you'll see the house listening; go to one here and you'll see half the house making notes and the other half

waiting to explain something or other in the composition to its companion in the next seat. The American, as Stokowski said, always wants to know what music is about, as if it were something by Einstein; he wants to understand it, as the phrase goes. He doesn't appreciate that music is simply to be felt and loved. The one way to get Americans gradually and in time to accept music for just what it is is to abolish all the nosey music critics. There are only two music critics in all of Europe, from the Channel to the Mediterranean, who try to explain music and no one wisely reads them, that is, no one but book publishers, writers of novels who wish to cabbage esoteric allusions from them by way of posturing an intimate knowledge of music, and some old fogies of both sexes who have got beyond getting any emotional reaction out of music and, like men who have fought in the long ago in brilliant and adventurous battles, now nurse their rheumatism and speculate as to what the war was about. In England, there is a music critic and a good one, Ernest Newman. He is very widely read there. That is doubtless why Englishmen love music so little."

"You are so right," said Lorinda, "but you are also somewhat cynical."

"And why not?" Varick demanded. "I am a poet. A poet, any real poet, is simply an alchemist

who transmutes his cynicism regarding human beings into an optimism regarding the moon, the stars, the heavens and the flowers, to say nothing of Spring, love and dogs. Was Leopardi less a writer of deathless verse because he was one of the darkest pessimists who ever lived? Show me an optimist and, almost without exception, I'll show you a bad poet."

Lorinda was sorry that she had started anything. When first she met Varick on board the steamer, her mood had been that of glad confetti; she was now slowly beginning to feel the way a fancy dress costume looks the next morning. Varick noticed her depression and sought to alleviate it.

"Enough about poets," he said, and Lorinda perked up. "I've been getting too serious. Seriousness is all very well, but too much of it is trying." He came over to her and sat close. Her heart fluttered. "Seriousness is so often false and absurd. Take the matter of statues, for examples. The trouble with the omnipresent statues to the great is that they invariably present their subjects in an arbitrarily serious and heavily solemn mood. One is thus as much like another as two peas. Surely there is room for a statue or two that will reveal its subject in a different humor. Let us have a Lincoln who looks less like a professional undertaker and more like the eye-twinkling Lincoln that he occasionally

was. Let us have the Napoleon of balmy Malmaison evenings instead of the inevitable Napoleon of chill Elba. Why not the Wagner of the farcical 'Der Berggeist' instead of the stereotyped Wagner of 'An Weber's Grabe'? Let us have at least one George Washington winking at an imaginary pretty girl, at least one General Grant slightly inebriated, at least one Grover Cleveland with a fishing pole. If biography is becoming increasingly forthright and honest, why shouldn't sculpture to a degree follow suit? Let us have more authentically human statues and not this endless succession of frost-bitten marbles and bronzes."

Lorinda's heart went back to normal.

"But I can tell that music interests you more than theories about poets and poetry," he took for granted and went on, and her heart became abruptly sub-normal. "Do you know where the weakness of our American music lies, dear lady? The weakness of American music lies in the circumstance that its hopeful composers are in the aggregate trivial men. Two or three of them are pretty sound artists in a technical direction but as men, that is, as human beings, the bulk of them are psychically, mentally and—this in particular—emotionally commonplace. I am not speaking of the jazz composers, obviously enough; they do not matter the one way or the other. They are diverting clowns,

often exceptionally competent and, in their little way, entirely praiseworthy. I allude rather to those Americans who are setting themselves to loftier aspects of the muse. In all their number you will have difficulty in finding more than one or two with half as much heart as any one of six American poets, with half as much intelligence as any one of a like number of American critics or with one-fifth as much depth of feeling as even any one of a dozen or more American novelists and short-story writers. And you know what I think of *their* depth of feeling."

Lorinda artfully contrived to mask a yawn as open-mouthed awe at Varick's perspicacity.

Encouraged, he proceeded:

"I have mentioned jazz and jazz naturally brings to mind the Negro. Have you, dear lady, considered the gradual rise of the colored man in the social scale south of the Mason-Dixon line? You should. It begins to impress itself upon those who follow his activities in that section of the land. Discontented with his long submergence, the Negro has set about elevating himself in no unmistakable manner and with results that, if not yet entirely satisfactory to him, promise in the perhaps not distant future a more or less rosy elegance. All over the South the colored man is taking steps to make a social figure, however yet humble, of himself and

to give himself an opportunity to enjoy some of the Caucasian usufructs. In Louisville, there is a Negro club whose stock of ingredients for the composition of juleps is the envy and despair of the white colonels, and whose dances, evening dress obligatory, are conducted on a scale not less high-toned than many of those held by the lesser Kentucky palefaces. At Juliette, Georgia, according to a recent issue of the Macon *News*, the colored ladies of the community have formally adopted and put into general use among themselves French instead of the more commonplace English titles and address one another as *Mlle.* or *Mme.* At classical Athens, in the same State, the *Red and Black*, the University of Georgia's campus newspaper, announces the formation of a new Greek letter fraternity composed of the Negro butlers of the white Greek letter fraternities at the college. 'In order to be pledged to this fraternity,' the college organ says, 'a man must be a butler at a Greek letter chapter house that rates (that is, that is regarded as of good social standing); he must attend all college football games; and he must wear genuine campus-cut clothes.' The brothers attend all the college games in full fraternal regalia, with their diamond fraternity pins conspicuously displayed in their neckties. Dances are to be held three times a year. In New Orleans, there are two tony Negro con-

tract bridge clubs. In Atlanta a fashionable Negro golf club is in process of formation and in Richmond plans have actually been made for a Negro polo team. In Charleston there is a Negro banqueting club that meets once a month and that invariably serves Pommery Brut, 1919. The best-dressed gentleman in the city of Nashville is commonly accepted to be Peter Galland, a colored man. The sales statistics for 1928 show that no less than seventy Negroes in the State of Texas own and drive automobiles costing more than three thousand dollars apiece."

Poor Lorinda. Why, she meditated, did she permit herself to stand for this sort of thing? What was there in her that held her to her purpose in the face of these discomfitures and disappointments? Why didn't she have done with literary men for good and all? As well, she concluded, ask herself why her hair was brown or her eyes the color they, in turn, were. It was simply the way she was; she couldn't help it. Some girls like thin men, some like stout, some—alackaday, one hears,—don't like men at all. She liked literary men. There was to them, in her eyes, that which no other men possessed. They might have their peculiarities, but in them lay still her romantic dream.

It wasn't so odd in her at that, she reflected. There was a girl in her set who had fixed her heart

upon prize-fighters and had married one; there were a half dozen others who could be made happy only by a title and had married titles; there was another girl, a dear friend of hers, who was set upon Argentinians and married one; there was still another who had a penchant for chauffeurs and who eloped with one. There was another who from childhood—which she apparently never outgrew—decided that if she didn't marry a Yale man she would never marry, and there were others still who could not be contented without an aviator. There was also a girl she knew well from her days at boarding-school who, though brought up admirably, had a curious susurration for Jews, and who actually married one. So her own idiosyncrasy was not so unbelievably grotesque. That is, in the matter of predilection. That she had, unlike these friends of hers, no immediate impulse to marry was her own business. Priding herself on her greater wisdom, she wanted simply romance, and the ardent pleasure that the romance she sought would bring her, and the glamour and memory that would proceed from them and make wistfully happy her future years. Was this pleasure that she craved to be condemned? No, it was something more than what it might seem to be to others with less acumen than she possessed—something deeper, more building of character, more permanent in its

influence. These fools who spoke of pleasure as if all pleasures were cut from the same wasteful pattern, who regarded hedonism as of a piece with imbecility! Hedonism, in the sense that the term is popularly employed, she reflected, is corrupted by the trivial and disdainful definition of pleasure. To speak of a hedonist is, in most dolts' minds, to speak of a golf player, guzzler or jazz dancer. Yet the real hedonists, above all men, were to be found among our first scientists and artists. It was not their profound pleasure in search and discovery and creation, selfish first and foremost as it was, that she, true enough, sought, but what she sought took on at least an aspect of relative importance when she thought of the puny pleasures of man in the mass as Hemingham had written of them. . .

Twelve strokes of the clock over the fireplace brought her suddenly out of her reverie. She was dimly conscious that during her meditation Varick had not stopped talking. At least, when her attention reawoke, his mouth was still open and it was apparently still making sounds. He seemed to have been reciting something by Stephen Phillips:

> "I dreamed last night of a dome of beaten gold,
> To be a counter-glory to the Sun.
> There shall the eagle blindly dash itself,
> There the first beam shall strike and there the moon
> Shall aim all night her argent archery;
> And it shall be the tryst of sundered stars,

The haunt of dead and dreaming Solomon;
Shall send a light upon the lost in hell,
And flashings upon faces without hope.
And I will think in gold and dream in silver,
Imagine in marble and in bronze conceive,
Till it shall dazzle pilgrim nations,
And stammering tribes from undiscovered lands,
Allure the living God out of the bliss,
And all the streaming seraphim from heaven!"

Or quoting something from Huneker:

"Huysmans is the antithesis of American culture. Huysmans is the rajah of writing, his brain the splendid macaw of all literature. He illumines the *fin de siècle* of his Europe like some effulgent and exotic Napoleon of words. His work, from beginning to end a fulgurating panorama of phrases, forms the rarest and most precious pages in the thought of France. To him may all stylists be compared—Verlaine, Mallarmé, De Gourmont, Barrès, Nietzsche, Louys, Pater. For beside the flame of his strange genius the Salome of Wilde, jewel-phrased courtesan that she is, pales to a shadowy bawd."

Lorinda was not sure; it might have been either, or both. She had caught, through her half-closed senses, whatever it was only vaguely, but she knew for a certainty that, whatever it was, it was, for all its possible merit on its own account, certainly nothing to the point. And her mind was made up.

She looked Varick straight in the eye. He put a cigarette into his mouth.

"Please don't light that cigarette!" Lorinda commanded, in a tone that surprised her no less than it did him.

"Why not, dear lady?"

"Because I wish to ask you something."

"And what is it, pray, dear lady?"

Lorinda inhaled her determination delicately but deeply.

"What is it, pray, dear lady?" Varick repeated, unnecessarily.

"It is simply this, Varick," Lorinda managed finally; "why haven't you shown the slightest personal interest in me?"

"Personal?" he began, with what approached a completely dumfounded look.

"Yes, personal!" Lorinda hurried on. "You've talked romance to me, but you haven't done anything about it."

"*Done* anything about it! What do you mean?"

"I want you," Lorinda said, very quietly and simply.

Varick brought a match to his cigarette. "I understand," he answered, just as quietly and simply. "And I am sorry."

"You are *sorry*—why?" Lorinda ejaculated.

"I am sorry because you do not understand the

poet-mind—*my* mind. To that mind, dear lady, what you propose is murder: murder of illusion and of romance. I do not look upon you and all your holy loveliness as something that other men, pitiably prosaic and realistic, would see in the light of a mere passing gratification of the flesh—much in the spirit that brought those Germans to train their guns on cathedrals; I look upon you rather as a gratification of the fancy, of the imagination, and of my dreams. I thought, alas, that you were like myself, that you sought what I sought: spiritual companionship. And now you would ruin it all! Sex is not for poets. Not for great poets, at least, and I have aspirations. Sex is a piggery for rhymsters. If Dante had cohabited with Beatrice, would we have had the Dante that we have? Byron's only verse worth a continental, even the best critics—if they read him more than superficially, which they don't,—would agree, was written during those periods when he had nothing to do with women and when his spiritual side triumphed over his physical. Recall that letter in which he said, 'I am a poet, I fear, only occasionally and then when I am done with the society of women and am romantically the master of my own impulses.' Shakespeare, while he actually lived with Anne Hathaway, was just a play-actor, painting up his face and anticking on the stage. During the period of their physical inti-

macy, he didn't write a line worth reading. But the moment he left off living with her he began to write poetry that will never die. I don't believe the stories of another woman in his later life; they are just as ridiculous as the legend of his shotgun marriage which doubtless issued phonetically and idiotically out of the circumstance that Anne came from the village of Shottery. Shakespeare, knowing the disillusion of sex, substituted drink for it. 'Hamlet,' 'Lear,' 'The Merchant,' 'As You Like It' and other such imperishable beauties were born not in a bed but in a bottle. Tennyson married, but found that he had to live at least temporarily apart from his wife, whom he admired sufficiently, if he would court the muse. What was back of Harriet Shelley's suicide and the subsequent life-long, satisfactory comradeship with Mary Wollstonecraft that allowed Shelley to pursue the peace of poetic creation? The absence of the sex relationship in both cases, or at least the infrequency of it, I'll guarantee! The tales of Swinburne, you know. Come down to the present time. To lesser men, infinitely lesser, to be sure. But look at them! Maeterlinck hasn't written a line of poetry worth reading since he took on that young bride of his. The only poet that France has produced in the last thirty years who may be called a poet—aside from Rostand—has, to put it very delicately, never glanced

at a woman. Is there a poet in Germany today worthy of the name? There isn't. I leave the reason to your imagination."

Lorinda was either catching cold or those were tears in her eyes.

"But—" she sniffled, or was it a sob.

"But," interposed Varick, "you are going to say: 'What of America?' There is hope for poetry in America!"

Varick's hat was in his hand.

"Goodbye," he murmured.

To say goodbye, goodbye to life and love so soon, so early, so rationalistically! Something out of Galsworthy came to Lorinda. "To say goodbye! To her and Youth and Passion! To the only salve for the aching that Spring and Beauty bring—the aching for the wild, the passionate, the new, that never quite dies in a man's heart. Ah, well, sooner or later all men had to say goodbye to that. All men —all men! . . . He crouched down before the hearth. There was no warmth in that fast-blackening ember, but it still glowed like a dark-red flower. And while it lived he crouched there, as though it were that to which he was saying goodbye. And on the door he heard the girl's ghostly knocking. And beside him—a ghost among the ghostly presences—she stood. Slowly the glow blackened, till the last spark had died out." . . . . He would hear that

ghostly knocking when it was too late to hear. He would go on writing his little rhymes, as lifeless as his life itself. He would continue to be like a leaf of autumn rustling unconsciously, vainly, futilely, toward the breath and warmth of Springtime. "The aching for the wild, the passionate, the new, that never quite dies in a man's heart. Ah, well, sooner or later all men had to say goodbye to that. All men—all men!" All men. A dismaying thought suddenly bolted through Lorinda's head. All *men*! Was it possible that Varick—was it possible that Varick was—? She thought of what he had said of that French poet.

"Goodbye," said Lorinda.

## CHAPTER XI

LORINDA even went to the length of considering golf, riding and tennis as a means to take her mind and emotions off themselves. But only momentarily. For she reflected that those young women friends of hers who went in for that sort of thing invariably became unpleasantly muscular in what should be the softest and most engagingly feminine portions of the corpus and, more, generally achieved faces—once the deceptive tan had left them—that looked like shoes that had walked miles of cobblestones. Then, too, her brother had views on the subject of exercise that she entirely shared.

"More and more, it seems to me," her brother argued, "the delusion that physical exercise is the valuable thing it's cracked up to be is dawning upon that portion of the public which is gifted with a share of common-sense. That exercise is valuable to a boy or girl in the younger years may or may not be argued with some conviction. But that it's good for anyone beyond those years is, if statistics and observation prove anything, another story. In my own wide range of acquaintance I

have known only two men who have been devotees of the exercise theory who haven't shown the evil effects of it when they crossed the line of forty. There may be statistics in the medical and health books and other propaganda organs that demonstrate the benefits of exercise, but my own personal experience and my observation of other men—hundreds of them—convince me that there's a lot that's bogus in the figures. For example, out of fifty-six men I knew intimately in my college days, thirty-eight were athletes and the rest, eighteen, cared no more for exercise of any sort than a Zulu cares for French perfume. Of the thirty-eight, fourteen died from natural causes between the ages of twenty-five and forty-two. Of the remaining twenty-four, eight today are invalids, six have periodically suffered serious nervous breakdowns, and one is able to work not more than five hours a day because of a weakened heart. Of the eighteen who didn't believe and haven't since believed in exercise, two were killed in the war, two died from natural causes, and the rest are today as thoroughly healthy, active and alive as so many fighting cocks. Of these latter, I have at least the temporary honor to be one.

"In my college days I was a bit of a backslider and actually did exercise a little—chiefly on a toboggan slide—but of exercise in the commonly ac-

cepted sense I knew little. And since that time my exercise has consisted chiefly in sedulously avoiding all forms of exercise. I pose as no professor in the philosophy of exercise. I simply tell you my personal observations and certain illuminating facts that have come to my attention. But it seems to me that such observations and facts have quite as much merit as the observations and records of those who choose to pose as authorities. If I printed what I am saying, I'd expect to receive letters from golf fiends, rubber-apparatus pullers, gents who touch the floor with the tips of their fingers fifty times every morning and night, and other such self-doctorers arguing that I was first cousin to the jackass for exposing such a contention to the public gaze. But the facts as they have presented themselves to me remain. And these facts cause me to conclude that many of those who believe that exercise is benefiting them are actually being benefited very little, and, further, that they would in all probability be a whole lot better off if they hung their golf clubs over the mantelpiece as mural decorations, converted their rubber-pullers into chewing gum and devoted the time they spend at present in touching the floor with their fingertips to reading *La Vie Parisienne*. Such exercise as they currently indulge in may give them the sense and feel of health, but I doubt that it gives them actual health

—at least, in the long run. When a man finishes eighteen holes of golf, he may feel like a lion; but a man feels no less like a lion, for that matter, when he has finished six cocktails. Exercise imparts a superficial feeling of health, but keep it up and in time it will give you biological delirium tremens.

"While not in the inside confidence of the Deity, I seriously doubt that God, when He put His children on earth, designed the perpetuation of their health and well-being after the same principle that He designed the perpetuation of the health and well-being of chipmunks. There is an old phrase, 'As healthy as a barber.' I have known many barbers in my life, but I have yet to know one who ever played golf or tennis, was a member of a baseball club, rode horseback, played polo, basketball or any other kind of ball, ran cross-country, climbed telegraph poles, or walked home from his work at nights. There is probably no more sedentary occupation than that of the tonsorial professor, and few occupations that are conducted where the air is so bad; yet the average barber, who, even on his day off, takes no more exercise than is involved in riding on a Coney Island roller-coaster or in going to a movie show, is generally in an enviably fit physical condition.

"Every man, of course, takes a certain amount of exercise unconsciously, and this, as I see it, is

enough for him. Whether he believes in exercising or not, he still walks more or less, climb stairs, lifts weights of one sort or another during his daily round, jumps on and off busses and street cars, pushes doors open and shut, waves his arm to friends across the street, and otherwise loosens up his muscles. The theory that this exercise is vastly more beneficial if he does it in a plus four suit, I can't grasp. But the majority of men think otherwise, which accounts for the prosperity of salesmen of oil stocks, divining rods, horoscopes, wall-papering lessons by mail, perpetual motion machines, genuine diamonds for $3.25, and other such sucker bait. The average man believes that exercise is valuable only if it is something that is described in one of Spalding's 'Guides.'

"The time-honored saying that England's great battles have been won on the playing fields of Eton is a lot of hooey. England's great battles have been won out of the shops and factories of the cities, the same as the great battles of almost any other nation. For one English boy who could and can afford the athletics of Eton, there were and are a thousand who get no more exercise than an occasional holiday permits them to—and in these thousands lies England's military glory, as in other similar thousands lies the fighting glory of other nations. Athletics, to repeat, are for athletes. The great

work of the world is not done by men with biceps as large as Smithfield hams or by proficient pole vaulters and water polo players, but by men who let their bodies quietly store up enough energy so that their minds may exercise themselves to their infinite content. Bismarck's chief exercise was eating. Anatole France said that his was sleeping. Van Cortlandt Park's tennis courts and golf links are full of curb brokers, shoe clerks and automobile salesmen."

No—exercise, whatever her emotional and physical malaises, could go hang, Lorinda concluded. She would seek instead to lose herself in books, the theatre—even the movies, which she occasionally frequented in much the same spirit of humorous, ironic curiosity that one occasionally frequents Chinatown, a black-and-tan joint or an evangelical church. The movies, of course, had always seemed to her the last word in juvenile imbecility but she found some amusement in surveying clowns like John Gilbert drizzling the passion of haberdashery clerks upon the varnished mouths of Scandinavian pot-wallopers done up like duchesses, and bootleg Hungarian blondes of forty in the rôles of little Alsatian convent girls whose panties were forever falling down by way of comedy relief, and fat old Germans like Jannings substituting a series of wigs for histrionic virtuosity, and the whole, idiotic

parade of scrubby ex-chorus girls and ex-valets, directed by halfwits, preening like Beardsley peafowls and peacocks their obvious and unmistakable barnyard feathers.

Yet, she meditated, some of the arguments commonly used against the movies—even against the talking movies, which were worse still, if that be imaginable—were not altogether sound. It is contended, for example, she deliberated, that the talkies are doomed to failure because the quality of the speaking voices of the movie actors is ridiculously defective. It might be argued with equal reason that the drama is doomed to failure because the quality of the voices of its actors is often similarly defective. The stage has presented us with voices, even in the relatively high places, that have been far from ear-massaging, yet the drama has somehow managed to triumph over them. Maude Adams' squeak didn't send "Peter Pan" to limbo any more than Lionel Barrymore's auctioneering roar, now that he has gone Hollywood, is likely to send the worst talking movie.

Even in the matter of movie captions and titles, and of what passes for gagging, Lorinda detected a measure of critical posturing that was not entirely justified. She wondered, indeed, what these mocking critics would think of such potential movie captions as the following:

1. "The fact that an intellect contains a few worms doesn't detract from its ripeness."

2. "The more you let yourself go, the less others let you go."

3. "A little health on and off is the best cure for an invalid."

4. "He was so cold that one burnt one's finger touching him. That's why many people thought him red-hot!"

5. "The most peaceful man needs only a big moustache to be regarded as a military and violent fellow."

6. "He was cracked—like a glass into which somebody had suddenly poured hot liquor."

7. "If you can't put your thoughts on ice, don't enter into a hot argument."

8. "Some husbands sigh over the elopement of their wives, but a much greater number sigh because nobody will elope with theirs."

9. "The trouble with marriage is that married couples live together."

She wondered what they would say when they were told that each and every one of them was culled literally from the works of Nietzsche.

But the movies, even with their pleasurable self-burlesque, were not long in getting on her nerves and she turned to the theatre for relief and solace. She loved the drama, as much, almost, as she loved

literature. It, too, of course was sometimes ridiculous—both it and its people—but sometimes it climbed the steps to beauty and made the moon its lozenge and sang its thrilling song. In the direction of the ridiculous, there was, for instance, the question of Ibsen and the actor. While it may or may not be true—so went her thoughts—that no actor has ever failed as Hamlet, it is pretty generally true that no actor or actress, however bad, ever fails to get away with murder in an Ibsen play. To the public in general and to the large majority of professional reviewers a bad actor or actress always seems surprisingly good when he or she appears in an Ibsen rôle. Last season alone in New York there were five different Ibsen productions, all of them atrociously acted, that none the less found their mummers praised for high proficiency. One may speculate as to the reason. That reason, she concluded, lies in the ambiguity and symbolic delicatessen promiscuously attached by dunderheads to everything that Ibsen wrote and in their consequent confusion as to what he was definitely driving at. This self-imposed bepuzzlement and self-distrust allow an actor or actress to indulge in any number of interpretive monkeyshines without fear of being found out. Since neither public nor critics are certain of what they know and want, the player may take advantage of that uncertainty

and, under cover of it, go the limit in the way of imbecile interpretation. Every actor or actress who undertakes a specific Ibsen rôle is known to have a different idea of it; no single rôle has ever been played by two different actors in exactly the same way. Some of these interpretations, taken singly, have been rational, sound and meritorious. But the great majority of them have been senseless and absurd. Yet how many such performances have been denounced as being senseless and absurd?

Then there was the time-honored nonsense concerning sudden changes in character, which were alleged to invalidate the outline of the character in point, to indicate a deficiency in the playwright and to make the character dubious and unbelievable. The argument was a familiar one. Lorinda had heard it dozens of times. And it persisted in her mind as one of the silliest of the many silly contentions of criticism as that august art is currently practised. It stemmed undoubtedly, she thought, from the ancient dramaturgic text-book rule that a character must remain, throughout the course of a play, more or less a single definite being, keyed to relevantly definite impulses and reactions and recognizable at all times in terms of its psychological and emotional premiss. "Distinct entity" was the phrase, she recalled, that the professors used. Nothing could be richer in foolishness. Human

nature, unfortunately, is not in the habit of conforming to dramatic text-books. There isn't one of us, she argued, who doesn't periodically change, if perhaps only for a short time, with the surprising suddenness—to ourselves as well as to others—of a lightning flash. History and one's own house are full of instances. A quirk of mood, an unexpected quirk of mind, a momentary impulse, a jiffyish metamorphosis of self—one of these descends upon the cerebellum or psyche and, *passe-passe*, the trolley-car is off the tracks! Clever playwrights may create characters who remain absolutely and entirely themselves from start to finish, but God is not quite so exact a craftsman.

One of the hardest things that much of modern drama has to contend against is the fashion that imposes short skirts on women, thought Lorinda further. In the days of ankle-length skirts it didn't matter what an actress' legs looked like so long as she had enough acting ability above the knee line. Today an actress must have passable legs to boot. It is impossible to accept an actress with bow-legs, fat legs or knock-knees as a heroine in anything except peasant drama, be she otherwise as talented as one might desire.

There were any number of such notions that assailed her. From time to time she jotted them down in a little book that other girls would have em-

ployed as a diary wherein to record the names of proficient tango dancers. Lorinda, incidentally, loved the tango but hated the kind of men with whom one necessarily had to dance it. Among the ideas scribbled in her book, were these:

§ 1

Acting is the easiest of the professions associated with the arts. Consider how many more proficient actors there are than even dancers!

§ 2

There has never been an actor, however bad, who didn't succeed in giving a good performance in the rôle of a butler, a policeman, or a Chinaman. Nor has there ever been an actor who didn't seem completely convincing in a telephone scene.

§ 3

The average present-day English actress playing a love scene has all the soft, wistful tenderness of Tschaikowski's 1812 Overture. There is something about these English women in the theatre that makes them persuasive in such love scenes only when they have golf sticks or tennis rackets about them. There is a hardness, a touch of assertiveness and masculinity to them that is disturbing.

§ 4

There is too much supercilious critical talk of plot at the expense of character. The great dramatists have always gone in lavishly for plot.

§ 5

The theatre will endure as long as there is a single pretty girl left to be shown on its stage.

§ 6

Modern drama is chiefly concerned with feeling the old emotions in a new way.

§ 7

It is the custom to disparage drama because it deals generally with platitudes. Disparagement might be meted out on the same score, and with equal justice, to most of the world's greatest novels.

§ 8

Whenever a colored musical show is produced, one hears the old one about the show's being so refreshing because the players seem to be enjoying themselves. That our colored brothers and sisters actually do seem to be enjoying themselves is surely not to be argued. Where the Caucasian song and dance

artists usually go through their antics as bored as an oil-well, the mezzotints invariably go through theirs with a ginny abandon, beaming Montezuma grins, gobbling every line as if were a delicious pork chop and shaking themselves with a tropical passion. The cause isn't so hard to make out. Our colored brethren have a good time for the simple reason that appearing in a white theatre before white audiences seems a big event in their lives and, in their elation, they want to make the most of it. Compare a colored show in a colored theatre before a colored audience with the same show moved downtown into the paler theatrical district and you will quickly note the difference. In the colored house, the players are often as lackadaisical as white performers, but once they enter a white house all is changed. There they feel that they are challenged and, knowing perfectly well their superiority as music show performers, that challenge gives them a heap of fun. It is so easy that they can smile confidently and the confidence makes them happy and gay. It is the same, in another direction, with white players when they come into the theatre, as do the colored ones, for the first time, or at least in the early stages of their careers. Although they then have relatively little assurance, the challenge and the novelty are there to spur them on and they go at their jobs with excited eager-

ness, set upon making a hit and giving every ounce of themselves toward that end. One can feel their intensity, their fever. It is an occasion for them, and the audience senses their appreciation of the fact. The older actors, on the other hand, to whom the whole thing is an old business, impress the audience as being just as stale as do the drowsy play-reviewers watching their lifeless performances.

## § 9

The phrase, polite comedy, due to one's protracted experience with it, invariably evokes a single picture. That picture consists of a fashionable drawing-room, evening clothes, mannerly servants, a few allusions to the Riviera and an epigram or so—or a picture largely of a piece. The picture is a sharp critic of the form of drama in question. Why should the latter be made to adhere so undeviatingly to formula? Are good manners the sole possession of fashionable drawing-room habitués? Why doesn't someone give us a polite comedy laid in humbler surroundings, say in the Harlem flat of well-bred, dignified, yet unfortunately impoverished folk? A true gentleman hasn't always a valet, a lady hasn't always a butler, and charm and warm grace aren't always the portion alone of country houses. I take the liberty, therefore, of asking for

a polite comedy laid in the Flatbush or New Rochelle sitting-room of a quiet, cultivated and amusing, if not fashionable or opulent, family. There must be such sitting-rooms and such people.

§ 10

I am sick of hearing my brother talk of the heyday of the late Mr. Charles Frohman's Empire Theatre and I shudder when every now and then the old playhouse makes up its mind to turn back a leaf and go Frohman again with the kind of play that used ubiquitously to grace its stage. That kind of play, as all and sundry have come to know, was one through which the late lamented Mr. Drew moseyed elegantly and epigrammatically, the while his leading woman laid plot against his celibacy and the lesser actors dished British gossip, French phrases and Chinese tea. On such occasions as the tony Mr. Drew was otherwise occupied, the stage was given over to Miss Barrymore or Miss Burke or to some momentarily imported English actor, the play, however, remaining in its general nature much the same. Miss Barrymore would appear in the latest modes as a wife whom Lord Algy Berkeley, the lovable old blockhead, did not understand and whom young Lord Noël Bloomsbury did, the while Nevins, the butler, periodically apprised va-

rious cabinet ministers, admirals, members of Parliament and voluptuous French counts that miladi would unfortunately be unable to run over to Le Touquet with them for the week-end. Or Miss Burke, also in the latest modes, would appear as a saucy young minx who played havoc with the leading man's heart up to five minutes of eleven, at which point the fellow would manfully grab her, give her a prolonged masculine buss and would thereupon be informed by her, very archly, that she had just been fooling him and had had a hankering for him—and, even more archly, maybe for a little stranger some day—since eight-thirty. When Miss Burke was off stage changing into the seventh, eighth or tenth last word in the latest mode, as the case might be, the supporting company, as in the other instances, would put the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company on its feet. The imported English actors, whether male or female, simply went through the same type of divertissement with doggier white waistcoats, if male, and somewhat dowdier frocks, if female.

* * * * *

How understandable it was, then, that when Lorinda met the soul-stirring Eustace O'Hara she was overjoyed that she had not wasted any of her energy on exercise.

## CHAPTER XII

EUSTACE O'HARA, in the phraseology of modern American dramatic criticism, was the only American playwright worth a God damn. The son of a stevedore, he had worked his way through two years at Harvard, being then expelled for making an indecent noise with his mouth during an open lecture by the eminent Professor George Pierce Baker, and subsequently and in rapid succession serving the world and his own belly as a freight-car conductor, banana-peddler on a Staten Island ferry, bathroom steward on the Albany night boat, Nantucket life-saver, Greenwich Village speakeasy waiter and shillaber with the Sells-Floto circus. It was accordingly and promptly maintained, as is customary in such cases, that he must have inherited his talent from his mother.

O'Hara had been writing plays for only a relatively few years but in that brief span had made his name a playhouse word not only in America but all over Europe. True enough, his dramas were somewhat too rich in *hells, lousys, guts* and *Cheezuses* to be regarded as anything but ephemeral and rather disgusting novelties by the more sclerosk-

eletal members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, but to the critical gentlemen of the *Nation, New Republic, American Mercury, New Masses* and other such organs of the devil he was the Saviour, Buddha, Mohammed and Mary Baker Eddy of the American drama all rolled into one. "Until Eustace O'Hara appeared upon the scene," they contended, "American drama offered little for the mature European interest. The records, previous to his time, showed a number of writers and a number of plays of transient quality, some of them amusing and some of them genuinely gifted in detail, but it brought to light none that bulked with body. The roll included some good melodramas that, while they departed from knavish Chinamen, heroic ensigns and Kentucky racehorses, were hardly worth more than a three hours' audience consideration; some workmanlike but negligible farces with drolly observed national idiosyncrasies; some comedies, patterned largely after British models, that sought to be American by eliminating the butler and pronouncing such words as *secretary* and *cemetery* in four syllables instead of three; some close caricatures of American phenomena that, while very worthy in their way—Ade's, for example—were, after all, like most dramatic caricature, evanescent; and some heavily straight-faced dramas, elaborately conscious of their own pseudo-profund-

ity, that momentarily managed to trick the pseudo-profound reviewers of the day into imagining them to be something important. But the roll included nothing, or at best very little, to persuade Europeans that our drama was anything but periodically diverting nursery play. With O'Hara, however, the native drama has begun to take on at least a measure of the significance that it previously lacked."

O'Hara, in short, had come to be to the American drama what General Sheridan had been to Cedar Creek. Nor was he himself, out of any mock modesty, oblivious of the fact. "The trouble with American drama before I heaved into it," he observed, "was that it was written for the most part by fairies trying to chew tobacco."

He never minced opinions. Where his fellow-playwrights, such as they were, conducted themselves politely after the manner of fashionable doctors and adhered to the principles of professional etiquette, praising and greasing one another like so many suburban neighbors, O'Hara looked matters straight in the eye and said his blunt say—and not only about other playwrights, but about actors, critics, producers and everyone else connected with the theatre.

"There is too much blah and bushwah going the rounds of the theatre and of everyone in it," he

would proclaim. "It gives me a lovely pain in the bottom. The critics, who ought to know better—though God knows why, considering the kind we've got here—peddle it until you have to get yourself orie-eyed in order to recapture your senses. Take this hoopdedoodle about important new playwrights that they're forever spilling. Contrary to the layman's opinion, it's the impulse and yearning of criticism, even the most hard-boiled and long-faced, to fish up out of the shallow waters at its feet an occasional whale, so that it may lay unction to its ability at angling and perhaps subsequently have its picture taken, for the impression of everyone, alongside the catch. The average critic each night before going to sleep prays that he may some day, by his superior nose for discernment, smell out a genius either still undetected or unappreciated by his fellow critics and so have something to strut and brag about. A commendable yen, surely. But it is the misfortune of most critics that this meritorious yen, like too much equally meritorious grog, often goes to their heads and induces a considerable unsteadiness in them. The wish to discover geniuses becomes a fixation; the fixation gradually becomes a mania; the mania in turn dilates the *globus oculi*; and there follows a promiscuous mistaking of sardines for monsters of the deep.

"In many critics, this passion to pull up big fish

has a patriotic touch about it, indistinguishable, on another plane, from carrying along a little American flag on a visit to Napoleon's tomb or ordering a Bronx cocktail at the Pschorrbräu. A national pride, perhaps even an unconscious racial perkiness over some such dazzling chapter in the Republic's history as dying for democracy in Nicaragua, insinuates itself into the critic's aesthetic armamentarium and causes him to dream of the day when Melpomene, Calliope and the other Muses may resemble just so many girls on Riverside Drive or Chestnut Street. The phenomenon isn't peculiar to American critics, however. Wherever you find critics, you'll observe it. In England, we have been entertained by the spectacle of certain critics telling St. John Ervine and a few other such bunkum-busters that they don't know what they're talking about and trying to elevate Britannia into a first-rate position by hymning second-rate performances in the arts. In Germany, von Unruhs and Neumanns are being cheered indiscriminately along with the Hauptmanns and Thomas Manns; in France, a whole herd of Vildracs and neo-Apollinaires are heralded as so many Second Comings; and in Italy, if we were to put any faith in the critical evaluations, a new d'Annunzio, with a luxurious crop of hair to boot, is born monthly.

"In our own beloved land, however, there is no

cause for grousing. Great geniuses are being discovered over-night today with the same assiduity that they were being discovered twenty-five and thirty years ago and that they have been discovered in the intervening space of time. There are so many whales in the sea, apparently, that there is hardly enough room left for Willard Mack and Sammie Shipman to go in wading. Reading the daily newspapers and a number of the magazines, one is dumfounded by the ostensible richness of staggering talents. Greece in its heyday becomes in comparison something like Paw Paw, Missouri. We hear of poets that make Shelley and Swinburne look like Greenwich Village débutants, novelists beside whom our Dreisers and Cabells and Lewises are jokes, and dramatists compared to whom I—who the critics evidently believe have been boosted long enough—seem not all that I at one time seemed. It is, as I've said, no original antic. Confining my remarks to the drama, we readily remember the first strains of the Sousa March criticism that greeted Bronson Howard and James A. Herne as rivals of the Europeans and that, gathering volume, went on to toot the glory and eminence of a rabble of third and fourth-raters including Fitch, Klein, Thomas, Belasco, Broadhurst, Sheldon and even the pious Kennedy. With years of practice, the brass band boys have gained a lung-power that presently be-

gins to out-puff even the wind of their critical forebears. Any American playwright who exhibits faint symptoms of what is known in the theatre as intelligence, which is to say a sum of wisdom and sagacity amounting in the world outside the theatre to the cerebral quotient of a bright lad of eighteen, is serenaded as a prodigy and very soon thereafter as an international genius. Any local playmaker who can write even half as well as the second level of native novelists is praised unreservedly as a great artist, and any one of enough sophistication to let his Magdas and Paula Tanquerays smile at least once during the evening as a super-Continental and a slick dramatic philosopher."

In the present European drama, O'Hara found little to interest him. "England offers next to nothing," he insisted. "Its bigwigs in the business of playwriting have either abandoned the theatre for the time being or are devoting themselves to such other diversions as works recounting in half a dozen hefty volumes the saga of some *paterfamilias Britannicus*, and scarcely less copious treatises informing women presumably quivering with impatience about Socialism and Capitalism, or having their kidneys irrigated at Continental mineral springs. The English theatre at present is given over almost in its entirety to composers of trivial sex comedies, trivial mystery plays, song and dance shows and

American box-office drivel. France is in somewhat better state, but only relatively. There's a measure of originality in its drama, but no imagination and skill to convert it into anything of any merit.

"As for Germany, the stage appears to have superseded the drama. Following in the line of Reinhardt and Jessner, though hardly blessed with their talent, a bird named Piscator is using the drama simply as a medium for the promulgation of his directorial and producing freakishness. He gives monkey-shows at the expense of plays, embellishing the latter unnecessarily with moving platforms, moving backgrounds, moving screens and moving whatnots that take all the moving quality out of the plays themselves. He's an expert at moving everything but his audiences. In Germany generally, this effort to dramatize the stage itself as distinct from the script is increasingly evident. It's the fad of the moment, stemming from the antecedent and often equally idiotic *Drehbühnen, Treppenbühnen* and kindred *Bühnen* with their Constructivist, Impressionist and Expressionist settings more appropriately suited to pleasure-park roller-coasters and love-tunnels than to the authentic dramatic stage."

As to reviewers, he expressed himself so:

"The generally maintained theory that play reviewers who have to rush their reviews into type

immediately after a play is over haven't the necessary time in which to arrive at a sound estimate of the play is flim-flam. The reviewer who can't make up his mind accurately as to a play's worth immediately it's finished hasn't any mind to make up. As well say that the reader of a book must moon around for days afterward and refer back to it periodically during that time before he can tell whether it's really good or bad. A play reviewer is supposed, often unwarrantedly, true enough, to have some taste, experience and judgment, and if he doesn't know the value or lack of value of a play after being in its company for three hours his boss should promptly reassign him to cover fires. It's my belief that the notion in question has been set in motion by the reviewers themselves, by way of craftily letting themselves down easily and apologizing for their critical incompetence. If they were given a week longer to meditate a play and arrive at a sounder point of view regarding it, it'd avail them little and it'd find them harboring their initial deductions, a fact sufficiently proven by their Sunday recapitulations which are merely expansions and substantiations of their morning-after opinions.

"The trouble with reviewing against time doesn't lie in this direction at all. Where it lies is in the direction of a smooth, effectively written and lifting

promulgation of expressed opinion, whether sound or unsound. Some men can write quickly and clearly under pressure for a spell, but even such blessed bozos can't manage it for long. Writing takes thought, and quiet, and time. Some of the finest examples of critical writing that have come down to us from the past are as full of nonsense as some of the worst examples of the critical writing that we're getting hereabouts today. But they're nonetheless literature, and at least superficially admirable. They've got, for all their intrinsic dubiousness, a fine bounce and kick. They weren't written between eleven o'clock and twelve of a night; they were written leisurely. Criticism is, after all, or at least it should be, something more than a magistrate's court or a slot weighing-machine. It should be something of an art on its own. Who cares what a poem says, so long as it's beautiful? Who cares what music seeks to prove, or painting definitely to portray? Who gives a damn about the meaning of 'Hamlet,' so long as one can delight in the soft thunder of its language? Facts and logic alone have never made criticism a full-bodied thing. They are, God knows, valuable and all too rare to it, but even a cannon, in order best to discharge its projectile, has to be carefully—very carefully and scrupulously—oiled and polished."

And as to actors, in this wise:

"The bane of the local stage today, almost any American playwright will tell you, is the pigment of effeminacy which afflicts a large proportion of its performers of the theoretically male species and which makes the casting of plays extraordinarily difficult. It isn't that the actors are biologically queer—often, it may be assumed, they aren't; it's that they possess or have acquired an air of effeminacy that, however hard or adroitly they try to conceal it, shows itself sooner or later during the course of a dramatic performance to its devastation. All of us have been witnesses of the thing. It isn't meet for one imbued with the principles of politesse to venture names and dates, but a recollection of any number of plays that have been vitiated of their force by effeminate actors in the rôles of forthright males is easy enough. Time and again an important scene, and with it the play as a whole, has gone to pieces because of an intrusive nance note. Often the actor shows no signs of the note during the early stages of a play, but gradually, as in the case of an actor with a game leg strainfully made to seem normal for a while, the truth comes out.

"Just what has brought about this pervading lizzie cast among our actors isn't easy to determine. It seems to be a development of the last ten or fifteen years; certainly it wasn't in great evidence be-

fore that time. The thing resolves itself into a guessing business and, taking it as such, I venture a few conjectures. The average American actor in more recent years, particularly the younger American actor, has apparently as his ambition a desire to emulate the English actor, who represents to him, for all his patriotic denial, the vintage mark. He thus apes the English actor's speech, dress and comportment and, since these quite obviously don't fit him, what results is a hybrid. The chief characteristic of this hybrid is the aspect of effeminacy, always the price of English imitation. An Englishman, thoroughly male, is so physically built that a tight-waisted jacket swings naturally on his frame; an American, racially of a quite different physique, looks womanish when he adorns himself with a jacket of similar cut. An Englishman's manner of speech, articulation and deportment are as naturally a part of him as his bad teeth, but adopted by an American they immediately take on a pixy hue. They are, on their native soil, as virile as the English themselves, but transplanted they take on a wholly different color. The entirely male man is never an imitator of other men; the moment a man patterns his speech and conduct, however slightly, after those of other men something seems a bit queer about him and that queerness invariably car-

ries under its obvious top layer of affectation a pistillate suggestion.

"In late years, an increasing number of our young American histrios have played in England and have come back denaturalized in mien and manner. They have returned like so many cuckoos and mocking birds, their old naturalness, simplicity, short *a's,* horn specs and box-back coats laid aside and in their places an assortment of absurdly copied nonchalances, drawls, monocles, spats and waistlines. They have pansied themselves out of their Americanism and have, by their foolishness, made themselves mongrels. The hardest job a producer has these days is finding juveniles who are distinguishable from ingénues. What we need are more actors like Jack Dempsey, who tried the stage a little while ago. Jack may not be much of an actor, but his worst enemy certainly cannot accuse him of belonging to the court of Titania. He thus is something of a relief to look at and to listen to on this fairy stage of ours. He isn't the only authentic male actor hereabouts, to be sure; there are others; but there are so many of the other kind that every one like him is certainly a help."

"I tell you," he would say confidentially, after the tenth drink, "it's often a big wonder to me that I go on wasting my valuable time on such a doghouse of a showshop and on the rotten incom-

petents that are its parasites. Consider what I, certainly the only playwright worth a hang in this god-forsaken country, have had to put up with! When I worked out the scheme of soliloquies and asides to suggest my characters' unspoken thoughts, what did the jackass criticasters puke. They puked that the soliloquies and asides were unnecessary, interruptive of the action, superfluous, repetitive and posturing. The play, already extremely long, would, they asserted, be the more compact and better without them. Exactly the same criticism, obviously, might be made—indeed frequently has been made by the same kind of dolts—of Schubert's C major symphony, a perfect thing, as every musician knows, despite its similar musical asides, repetitions, interruptions and alleged superfluities. As a piece of musical writing it's relatively as long as my play and the same arguments may be used by fools against it, but it remains none the less—to pop a platitude—a consummately beautiful work. And if it's seldom, if ever, played in its entirety, let the critics who imagine that in that fact they've found a good argument be made aware of the equally pertinent fact that my play as it was played was also not played in its entirety, but was very liberally cut down.

"What is argued against my asides and soliloquies may just as logically be argued against Shakespeare's.

If mine might be cut out as largely superfluous and interruptive of my play's action, so might Shakespeare's. Most of the soliloquies written by Shakespeare were simply put into his plays to please actors and the plays would move much more dramatically without them. If you doubt it, read almost any one of them, even 'Hamlet,' with the soliloquies and asides deleted. To contend that Shakespeare's soliloquies constitute great poetry and that mine do not is to sidestep the direct issue. That issue is simply whether my soliloquies and asides are dramaturgically valid. Poetry or lack of poetry has nothing to do with the case. In any event, the argument is based by the critical clowns, as so often happens, merely upon labels. The truth about soliloquies and asides as I employ them is that, while they are cunningly announced by me to represent my characters' unspoken thoughts—I'm a shrewd hand at concealing the obvious and artfully masking it in a way to make the impressionables gabble—, they are actually nothing more than straight dramatic speeches, as anyone can readily determine by referring, for example, to the dramatic scene, say, at the conclusion of my sixth act. I've simply written my characters' thoughts in terms of straight dramatic speeches and have passed the device off on the idiotic novelty lovers by craftily insisting that they are only mute meditations.

"As to the yawps over my play's considerable

length—it runs for something like five hours—we behold criticism based on the sensitiveness of the yawpers' sterns rather than on the work of art itself. A certain critic finds that his tail becomes weary after sitting out the play and hence confounds his tail with his cerebrum which, in his case, is largely indistinguishable from it. Art is thus estimated not in terms of mental pleasure but of physical discomfort: the old Babbitt plaint that the Louvre is altogether too large for enjoyment and that the lulus at Bayreuth are awful. While it's not to be denied that a five-hour play imposes more of a strain on one than a two and one-half hour play, the strain surely is no reflection on the play's quality. A Chinese drama that runs for three nights is not *ipso facto* worse than a play by William Hodge that runs for a couple of hours. The Oberammergau Passion Play, that runs on and on, may still conceivably be better than one of the Rev. Dr. Charles Rann Kennedy's shorter Biblical exhibits. Shaw's two-night 'Back to Methuselah' doesn't impress me as being great shakes, but the fact remains that when it was cut down to one night's playing time it was made twice as senseless and twice as dull as it would otherwise have been."

"Honest to God," O'Hara would yawn, "sometimes I think I made a big mistake in the way of self-respect not to stick to that old job on the Albany night boat!"

## CHAPTER XIII

LORINDA, after the sentimental shufflings and evasions of her poetic friend, found O'Hara a joy. His forthright manner and directness exhilarated her. Here at last, she thought, was no preposterous dodger of issues, no player of ring-around-a-rosie with himself, no altiloquent truant to life. What was more, he was very good-looking—not handsome in the lyric way that Varick was handsome, but striking in the way that certain traffic policemen and young Catholic priests are.

"I can tell by one look at you," he had said not more than fifteen minutes after their first meeting, "that you are interested in certain physical aspects of life—and, God bless you, why shouldn't you be? You are young; you are beautiful—God be praised!; and"—this as if to clinch his viewpoint in the matter—"you've got good common-sense."

Lorinda had contented herself with a revival of the Corot look.

"Therefore," he had continued, "we'll come to all that, with your permission, in due time. Meanwhile, I hope you don't mind my bluntness." (Lorinda's face at this moment would have delighted a

satirist like Max Beerbohm.) "I am not much on manners, either in or out of the theatre. As a matter of fact, life and the theatre are one and the same thing to me; I look on life as the theatre. Any man who doesn't isn't worth a hoot and never has been worth a hoot as a dramatist, whatever the fool critics say to the contrary. The whole question of manners, in life as on the stage, is colored by nonsense. Take the stage and what is called polite comedy. Along comes such a play written by an American that has viewpoint, wit, sophistication and periodically a writing skill that can match those of the best English plays of the same species, and yet it has also that apparently inevitable something that always seems to make even the most proficient American polite comedy inferior to the English. It's customary to observe in such cases that the difference lies in the direction of manners and suavity, that the American doesn't come naturally by the Englishman's grace of manner and ease and hence is on alien ground when he tries to invade the field of drawing-room comedy. This, of course, is the purest bosh, for, as everyone knows, some of the very best modern English polite comedy writing has been achieved by Englishmen whose acquisition of urbanity and the social graces is of a distinctly recent vintage. The difference lies in another direction. Polite comedy is intrinsically not an Amer-

ican form, any more than journalistic melodrama is an English form or sex farce a German, and as a consequence the American, whatever his talents, is never entirely at home in it. There are certain types of plays that are peculiar to a nation and certain others that are strange to it, and the playwright of a particular country who tries to handle one of the strange types generally, because of national and racial idiosyncrasies, finds himself with his shirt-tail hanging out. There are exceptions, true enough, but they're negligible. As a usual thing, the American who sets himself to write a polite comedy fails just as the Englishman does who tries to write such a play as 'Broadway' or 'The Front Page.' These are as native to purely American playwriting as polite comedies like 'The Constant Wife' and 'Aren't We All?' are to purely English, and, whatever the skill of the Englishman, evade his grasp. It's as difficult to imagine an Englishman writing something as good in its way as 'The Racket' as it is to imagine an American writing something as good in turn in its way as 'Our Betters.' It's as difficult to imagine, indeed, as it is to picture an American completely at home in an English suit of clothes or an Englishman completely comfortable in an American.

"This seems to be true even where the American writer of polite comedy may personally have all

the smooth cosmopolitanism and manners of the English writer. If this has the sound of paradox, then there's also the sound of paradox to the equally authentic circumstance that, as between an American and an English song writer of relative national identity, pulse and mood, the American will almost invariably be found to be the more efficient in the composing of melodies that affect the popular heartstrings, not only of his own people, but of the English as well. The essence of drawing-room comedy, to return to what I was saying, is not manners as much as it is a species of diplomacy, of subtle evasion and equivoque, of groping for the truth in terms of falsehood, and to this form of playwriting the Englishman brings all the talent of his race for that other and more important diplomacy of the world beyond the stage drawing-room. The best polite comedy is a kind of masquerade attended by an assortment of plenipotentiaries and intrigants. The characters' true selves are always faintly concealed behind the masks of humor and wit. One knows who they are, but isn't in a position to swear to it. In the polite comedies written by Americans the disguises are too immediately easy and transparent; the air of masquerade and frolic is seldom even momentarily glamourous or convincing. The English playwright puts metaphorical dominoes on his characters over their evening clothes; the

American puts evening clothes on his over their dominoes.

"The best polite comedy is in essence a mere concealment of insults in a veneer of the punctilio. Yet where an American writer has difficulty in giving such insults a charming grace, the English playwright manages the trick handily by writing them always as if the person delivering them didn't entirely mean them or as if the person receiving them insouciantly didn't believe them to be in the least fitted to himself. It's the mark of American drawing-room comedy that when a character is politely insulted by another character he either enters into a more or less prolonged harangue with the other character, which shifts the mood of comedy into one approaching drama, or attempts to dismay him with an assertive *mot*. It's the mark of English drawing-room comedy that when one character is smoothly insulted by another he sustains the mood of polite comedy either by manufacturing an epigram that has hardly anything to do with the case or, after stretching himself boredly, by announcing that he thinks he'll go out and play a little tennis."

O'Hara smiled. "I know what you're thinking; you're thinking that I talk an awful lot at a stretch without taking time out to light a cigarette or to relieve the strain and make things more gracious

by saying, 'Don't you think so?' or 'What is your idea?' every once in a while. But that's only a trick of bad playwrights and bad novelists who haven't got anything to say and who try to cover up their short wind and distract their audiences or readers with the shenanigan. Anyone who has anything to say, says it. You won't find such men as Shakespeare or Rostand or Shaw interrupting their fine long Hamlet soliloquies or Chantecler hymns to the sun or Caesar addresses to the Sphinx with any such childish dodges. But cheap plays and cheap novels of cheap men are so chock-a-block with idiotic 'If you don't mind my going on, Lord Whangdoodles' and 'I trust I am not boring you, Lady Balderdashes' on the one hand, and 'He interrupteds' and 'She started to demurs' on the other that you feel like letting out a loud yell."

"I fear many critics consider you a radical," ventured Lorinda.

"Radical hell!" O'Hara shouted. "I hate the damn word. It is disreputable, and for a good reason. The disrepute that envelops the radical movement in America is, contrary to our professional and volunteer observers, traceable not to the doctrines espoused and expounded by the radicals but almost wholly and entirely to the character of the radicals themselves. The objection and hostility of intelligent Americans to their radical fellow-citizens are

grounded not upon the principles the radicalistos preach but upon the preachers. These, almost without exception, fail of sympathy at the hands of the intelligent American not, as is sometimes also foolishly argued, because they're loud-mouthed, ill-natured and unkempt fellows but, very simply, because they haven't got any sense. More, they are inarticulate in the matter of what borrowed, second-hand sense they may occasionally and conceivably posture. No man much cares what another man may look like or even smell like if he has something of interest or importance to say, and knows how to say it. The American radical, however, offers to his critics only the comical look and the smell.

"The English, German, French, Russian or Italian radical commands respect even in quarters where his doctrines prove distasteful. The radical movement in those countries has as its mouthpieces men of forceful, original and logical mind. Some of them may look like old ragbags, but no one can deny that they have sense—or at least wit—and a lot of it. Consider England alone, and men like Wallas, the Webbs, Shaw, Macdonald, and others, together with many of the minor prophets. Or think of the character of the leaders of the radical movement in France, Germany, Russia and Italy. These men are scholars. What have we got in their boots in

America? A pack of fired and disgruntled schoolmasters, back-alley rhetoricians, Greenwich Village boys and corn-belt indignantos, all cuckooing feebly and garbling nonsensically the precepts of first-rate intelligences overseas. Consider even the two big latter-day *pièces de résistance* of the movement, Gompers and Debs. Neither had a mind; both had simply a gift for soap-box spieling. The European radicals laughed loudly and impolitely at Gompers when he went abroad and did his stuff. He was the Levine of his day over there. The profoundest thing that the rank and file of American radical masterminds have been able, with concentrated effort, to think up to say against American capital in the whole last thirty years is that the late J. Pierpont Morgan had a red nose and a mash on an actress."

Lorinda marvelled at O'Hara's vitality and the marvelling, needless to say, gave her an infinite esoteric connotative satisfaction.

"How old are you?" she asked him.

"Forty-five," he replied.

"But you don't look a bit over thirty-one or two," she said.

"I know it," he answered. "There's only one thing that keeps a man young and that's the thrill of large cities. I aged more in the six years I spent out in the godforsaken little dumps than I've aged in all the years I've hung around the big towns.

The oldest man this side of the grave is the American farmer of forty-five. Where his city compatriot of like age is still a fellow of considerable juice and bounce he's already, even in those relatively tender years, in the sere and yellow. The farmer of forty-five looks like a city man of sixty or more. The reason isn't hard to get at. In the agricultural belts of the land, life is more monotonous and routine more humdrum than anywhere else in Christendom. Day in and day out they grind along without variation, without stimulation, without a single thing to give them color or excitement. And it's under this deadly grind that the rube is reduced to an old man long before his time. The spirit of youth is kept in a man by the little galvanisms and intoxications of his environment, and in the rural districts these are practically *non est*. The yokel never hears music, even jazz, except on a cheap phonograph; his eye is never popped by a pretty girl; he has to do his drinking out of a dirty jug; his vista is one of weather-beaten barns, barbed-wire fences and manure; the house he lives in is aesthetic homicide; he reads nothing but patent medicine almanacs and the four-sheet newspaper printed in the nearest village; his cooking has no variety; there is no reason for him to shave, or even to take a bath; there is, in a word, no challenge, no inspiration, no conflict. And, like an animal, he

turns to dust long before other and more fortunate beings. Look at the farmer of middle years and you see a man whose face looks like a dried prune and whose eyes are wholly without curiosity and sparkle and whose body is as sapless as a grandpa's. One good barber-shop and one Follies girl in the rural counties would effect the cure for the farmers' ails that all the Peruna in the Hoover empire has so far failed to."

"And the theatre," he went on. "That keeps one young, too. To live artificially but beautifully—that's the trick! And the theatre provides the means. It keeps its people young, whether they're seventy-odd-year-old Shaws or fifty-year-old Ethel Barrymores or fifty-year-old Sacha Guitrys or seventy-odd-year-old Mrs. Whiffens. Where else will you find the youth that remains in the men and women who work about the theatre either as playwrights or actors? To believe in make-believe with all your heart—but just a bit humorously and intelligently—that's what Ponce de Leon might have stayed at home and learned in time—so says this Mr. Eustace Swedenborg!"

And O'Hara put his arms around her, drew her to him, and gave her a big smack.

"Forgive the hero of the melodrama!" he laughed, as he duplicated it with an even bigger one. "And speaking of melodrama—by the way, how about a

little drink?—a glance at present-day playwriting in America seems to disclose an unmistakable fact, and this is it: that where once farce was the medium most satisfactorily employed by native playwrights to reflect gamy phases and characteristics of the American scene, melodrama has superseded it. Melodrama is undoubtedly the form of drama most patly suited to the salty depiction of life in America at the present time. The country may offer excellent material for farcical and sardonic comment to the literary and critical fraternity, but to playwrights it offers especially the materials of melodrama. The America of today is, beneath its comical aspects, essentially a 10-20-30 meller, with all a 10-20-30 meller's theatrical bounce. The gunmen of Chicago, the prison-breakers of Folsom, the Administration crooks at Washington, the bootleggers, the husband-killers of New Jersey, the hullabaloos of Herrin, the evangelical scandals, the blackmailing revenuers, the automobile bandits, the night-club and police grafters, the speakeasy and gambling murders, the hold-up men, the mail-train robbers, the Oklahoma gubernatorial insurrections, the Canadian border smugglers, the Atlantic rum-runners—these are ready-made for the melodrama stage. They need only a border of footlights and a couple of smelly female ushers to convert them into vivid three-dollar theatre shows.

"The critical disrepute into which melodrama has fallen is as absurd as it's unjustified. It's simply the result of the usual professorial posturing on the part of label-licking critics with a passion for pigeonholes and bogus definitions, critics who may be identified as the kind who get a fake dignity into their critical writings by calling everybody in sight Mr. or Miss. If some gimcrack like 'The Noose' or 'Interference' is melodrama, so is 'Macbeth,' but they conveniently choose to overlook the fact and to assuage their whiskers with the old definition, largely made up of holes, to the effect that melodrama is inevitably an inferior form of drama because in it character is determined by action rather than, as in drama, action by character. Say melodrama to the half-wits and their minds promptly fix with robot-like precision upon Maryland Calvert swinging on a bell, Sherlock Holmes escaping from the gas-house by fooling Moriarity with a cigar-butt, or the United States Marines arriving in the nick of time, the while they remain cockily oblivious of a number of the great Greek classics, Shakespeare's chronicle plays and other such generic melodramas."

He negotiated the sizeable highball that Lorinda handed to him in one magnificent swallow. "Fine stuff," he allowed, looking around to appraise the amount of fineness still left in the decanter.

"I am often amused by what the critics who don't like you say about you," ventured Lorinda.

"I am often more amused by what the critics who do like me say about me," returned O'Hara. "But what had you specifically in mind?"

"Well, they say that you can't bring yourself to write even a simple love scene without having an ominous thunderstorm going on outside and that you can't let a character even eat an apple without playing, by way of Freudian symbolism, the William Tell Overture."

"Asses! Even when they do vaguely hit on the truth, they don't know how to express it. They tell the truth as women do—in terms of falsehood. Do they ever tell the exact truth about anything connected with the theatre? Indeed, do they know the truth at all? They do not. Forget me and my own plays for the moment and look at their attitude toward comedy, for instance. They deliver themselves of a lot of walla-walla on the subject and what are the real facts? Given a good enough idea and even an indifferent skill at playwriting and an entertaining comedy will come damn near automatically writing itself. The result mayn't be all that the professor-critics might wish for, but it'll pretty generally manufacture enough laughs to atone in considerable measure for their professional depression. A poorly written comedy with a fresh

and popping idea is often actually very much more amusing than a well-written one with an idea somewhat less jouncy, at least to everybody but those who still insist that laughter must be literature. It would be hard to think of a comedy with an idea as good as 'The Illusionist' failing to get its effect, even though its writing were much less than admirable, which the writing of 'The Illusionist' certainly is. Or of one with a thematic scheme good as 'The Bachelor Father,' or 'The Command to Love,' or 'A Single Man,' or 'Seven Keys to Baldpate,' or de Caillavet's and de Flers' 'The King.' It isn't Sacha Guitry's dramaturgic skill that makes his comedies the howls they are; it's the ideas on which he builds them. And, conversely, all the playwriting skill of an Augustus Thomas or an Owen Davis hasn't contrived to make amusing the comedies which they have built on banal ideas.

"A good drama may result from excellent craftsmanship visited upon a mediocre theme, but a play that aims to get laughter depends a hell of a lot more on its foundational scheme than on mere writing ability. The successes of the better modern comedy writers attest to this fact. Their most entertaining pieces are seldom their best in the way of craftsmanship and in purely critical adjudication. Shaw's 'Fanny's First Play' is one of the old boy's negligible jobs, but it's surely as comical a play as he ever con-

cocted. Lonsdale's 'Spring Cleaning' is certainly not to be compared in any sober critical sense with even Maugham's 'The Camel's Back,' yet the idea of it provides infinitely more diversion than all the expert technique with which Maugham tried to hide the lack-lustre idea of his play. Pinero's 'The Wife Without a Smile' depends largely upon its droll idea for laughter; his better-written comedy, 'Preserving Mr. Panmure,' doesn't get half as many intelligent laughs for the simple reason that its basic mountain-out-of-a-molehill idea is stale.

"As I say, the subject matter is all-important. There may be some critics who maintain that good writing should still make me laugh heartily over the comedy ideas that consist in a widow passing off her twenty-five-year-old daughter as a child of ten, in an unmarried couple pretending they are married in order to inherit an uncle's money, and in a venerable bachelor's discovery that his ward has only pretended to love the juvenile in order to conceal her passionate yen for him, but I fear I don't possess the talent that they expect of me. The object of any theatrical comedy I hie myself to is, I take it, to amuse me and I can't be amused by even the most proficient literary gent telling me an old joke. If I want to amuse myself in that way, there is always the library.

"Or take, for example, the nonsense that these

same critical donkeys write about censorship. Censorship, since the beginning of time, has amounted to little more in the final summing up of things than an irritating mosquito bite on the amplitudinous body of art. It's been annoying while it lasted, true enough, but it's never lasted very long in any one place or in any one important direction and no one has suffered from it except for a relatively short and negligible period. At the moment, indeed, I can think of no modern work of art, high or low, that official censorship has contrived to keep from the eye and ear of any one generation; sooner or later during the life of that generation the censorship has collapsed sufficiently to release the work in point. If it's been a play that's been suppressed, the printed version of the play has become available. If it's been a book, translators have come to the rescue with editions in other languages. But even these subterfuges and evasions have seldom been necessary.

"The opponents of censorship, that is, those who make the loudest noise against it, are generally found to be professional firecrackers who have never calmly studied the question and who consequently imagine that because some official jackass claps the lid on a single book or play the entire art of literature and of drama is threatened forevermore. In the last fifty years, censorship in France,

Germany, Austria, Italy, England and America hasn't retarded literature or drama one iota. Not a single reputable book or play has been successfully and completely lodged under the ban for more than a short time and, even if it had been, common-sense persuades us that it wouldn't have mattered so awfully goddam much at that.

"The chief howlers against censorship are usually of the same fraternity that gets itself magnificently worked up over theoretical atrocities in the other channels of life. You'll find them, when there is no artistic censorship to inflame them, yelling against the anti-birth-controllers, as if birth control weren't already in sufficiently practicable operation, against the Ku Klux, as if half-wits were transformed into Machiavellis by the simple process of concealing their flat-heads in diapers, against the philosophy of Tennessee yokels, as if what Tennessee hill-billies believed this way or that mattered a hoot, against a hundred and one such hypothetical catastrophes and dangers. The phrase, 'the principle of the thing,' is one of the emptiest in the language. The principle of a thing may occasionally be wrong, but the thing itself, after the hullabaloo is over, is usually discovered to take care of itself pretty well. Look back over the indignations of the last century and you'll find that time has shown them to be more or less foolish. For a while they may have seemed justifiable and sound, but a few ticks of the big In-

gersoll and all has become automatically daisy again. I'm against censorship of any kind in any direction at any time, but if it comes now and then I don't permit myself to get steamed up over the fact any more than I do over any other human blunder. It'll all come out in the wash, experience proves, in no time.

"The trouble with the great majority of critics is that they take almost everything for granted, provided it's been told to them long and often enough. Just because they, like everyone else, have never known or heard of a woman who married a barber, they doubtless conclude that no one ever marries a barber, yet I've never known a barber who wasn't married. But I can see that your mind isn't altogether on what I've been saying. And I have a pretty good idea as to what it is that it is on." He smiled whimsically. "Am I right?"

"Yes," Lorinda answered him, "I think you are." She paused a moment. "How about another one of those things?"

O'Hara glanced at the decanter.

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" she exclaimed.

"Those things?" O'Hara lifted an eyebrow. "Then—then what did you mean?"

"This," she said. And, courageously putting her arms around him, she lifted herself up and showed him.

Lorinda, she smiled to herself, was getting on.

## CHAPTER XIV

"WELL, anyway," observed O'Hara, "I'll say you're attractive."

"*Anyway?*" Lorinda echoed, drawing back aghast. "What in the world do you mean?"

"What I mean is just this," was his reply. "I think you're a swell girl and all that, but—and I'll be characteristically blunt about it, if you don't mind —I am so fed up on sex that I'm dead sick of it."

Lorinda collapsed into the nearest chair like a meatless sausage. Dismayed, she managed to blurt out: "But *you* kissed *me* first! If—why—if—"

"Damned if I know," O'Hara calmly answered. "I must have forgotten myself for the minute. I wasn't thinking. It's when I get even a moment to think about it that sex—from kissing to everything else—palls on me. Oh, I sure haven't been that way always—not by a whole big jugful—but I have been that way for this last year, and how! I'm like a bartender who has passed through the D. T.'s and doesn't want to touch the stuff anymore. I've seen, heard, read, written, staged, thought, analyzed and criticized sex until the word gives me a headache. I've seen, in the course of my more or less constant

theatre-going to find out what the other fellows were writing, no less than three thousand plays on sex in the last eight years. I've heard sex, sex, sex on a hundred stages. I've read so many books on sex and so many sex novels that they've acted like a Keeley Cure on me. I've written a dozen plays on sex myself; my last one, dealing with science and religion, is the only one I've written in seven long years that hasn't dealt with sex and I find I've been so poisoned by the contact with literary and dramatic sex that I couldn't entirely keep it out of even that one! I've directed whole herds of actors and actresses in sex scenes and I've talked on the lecture platform about sex as I've regarded it in my plays until the icewater has given out. I've listened to thousands of people discuss sex as I've treated it and I've read hundreds of critics on the same subject. I've talked and listened to my publishers on the sex element in my work and I've had many run-ins and legal scraps with the censors about it. And you wonder why I'm sick of it!"

"But you're a man and human," wailed Lorinda.

"Yes, but I am also a man and human who happens to have an awful case of sex indigestion. Consider what I've gone through! Incidentally, may I have another drink to give me a little strength and help me forget my misery? I have seen, up to date, two hundred and sixteen plays in which Lily Hol-

lownoodle, the trusting pie-faced ingénue, has been deflowered by the loose and cajoleful Reginald Woofus, embellished with spats. I've seen three hundred and nine in which Evangeline Mushbanks has run away from her husband, the estimable but somewhat stodgy Herman Mushbanks, and given herself to young Lord Pantscrease in the private supper-room of the Big Boar Inn at Twitchtwitch. I've seen one hundred and eighty-eight in which governesses were ruined by sophomores home from school, and one hundred and seventy-two in which financiers respectably married to brunettes have been fetched and ruined by girls with yellow hair, and four hundred and thirty-seven in which the authors confused beds with the Polo Grounds. I've seen dozens of plays in which the sum of human enterprise and endeavor has been represented as consisting in either the epigrammatic or physical violation of a woman's chastity and dozens of others in which pornographic playwrights talked sex for two and a half hours in terms of haylofts, peep-shows and call-houses. I've listened to bad Freud and Jung in terms of worse actors and actresses until my ears gave out. The theatre and everything concerned with it—and that is the life I lead—has had the same effect on me that a visit to a bordello has on the average man: when he comes out of it he is, for the time being at least,

the most surfeited and moral fellow in Christendom. Can you expect a man to feel like chasing a girl around the room with any enthusiasm after he has gone through my dreadful vicarious experiences? He'd laugh himself to death and collapse before he got half-way around the table! After years of Wedekind, Strindberg, Lenormand, Brieux and Mae West I am just about as excited over sex as a guinea pig would be over 'Fanny Hill.' When I crave a good, exciting, novel evening I go over to Newark and spend it with my old aunt. I've seen plays dealing with Lesbians, fairies, nigger-lovers and nymphomaniacs until, I assure you, Art Young's nice cool sewer looks like Du Barry's boudoir to me. I've written plays and made a reputation and fortune for myself as a dramatist of sex until the prospect of indulging in sex thrills me about as much as the prospect of indulging in a motor ride would thrill Henry Ford!"

"But sex is life," sobbed Lorinda.

"Sex *was* life once upon a time, but now it would seem to be literature, or one of the other arts. At least that's the way it appears to the artist. He expends so much sex on and, more exactly, in his work, that he has none left for life. He exhausts his inclinations and imagination in pen and ink, in oils, marble and music, until the very thought of sex outside his work is like the thought of eating

mustard to a man with a mustard-plaster on his chest. Sex is no longer even a transient pleasure to him. A pleasure is something casual and charming; consequently, sex to a man like me who works professionally with it is approximately as casual and charming a potentiality as a fire to a fireman."

He took out a cigar and lighted it. Lorinda accordingly knew that now all was lost.

"I'll return to the subject shortly," he said, holding the cigar before him, rolling it fondly in his fingers and appraising it with admiration. "Meanwhile, why is it that my own plays on sex have been received with critical acclaim? Because, if I say it myself, I am as honest about sex and character when I write about them as I am when I speak about them to you. I don't, like most of the other joeys, arbitrarily give my villain better manners than my hero and imagine that by doing so I have achieved an equitable characterization of the villain. Nor do I, like the others, place the more unpopular opinions and philosophies in the mouths of my heroes and heroines and imagine that I have thus achieved rational and original character delineation. I don't dress up my Jack Trevors as Desperate Desmonds and my Desperate Desmonds as Jack Trevors and believe that both of them thereby achieve a closer approximation to real, living human beings. I don't go in for such buncombe.

I am the Ziegfeld of the emotions and of biology. I undress them realistically and adorn them, for propriety's sake, with simply a loin cloth of poetical chiffon. I refuse to affix labels to my characters or to their actions and my refusal to do so is sometimes mistaken by the lard-heads for a posturing immorality. They think I'm an ethical bootlegger, the ninnies! Loving above everything else to pretend a momentary sophistication and emotional atheism that—when they get back home to baby—they are thoroughly ashamed of, they gulp down tripe that ladyfingers sex or that shrewdly dresses up sin by Boué Sœurs and morality by Gimbel, but they gag at the perhaps deplorable facts of life as I present them, with no wisecracks to laugh them off, no incidental piano-playing of Chopin by the loose fish to prove to everyone that his heart's in the right place after all, no cute, pretty virgin cast to soften a strumpet rôle, and no concession on the part of any character toward any other, except anatomical.

"Sex as we find it customarily treated in the drama gets nowhere nearer the truth of things than dirt does to an airplane. It's above the intelligence and experience of the average playwright. Hence when it doesn't bore one it stupefies one with its juvenile imbecility. A man can be fed up on and disgusted with a subject when it has long been made nonsensical as readily as he can be when it has long

been made too intelligent—so my mood cuts both ways. One wouldn't relish listening to Einstein talking sense for a solid year without a let-up anymore than one would looking at Charlie Chaplin dropping his pants for the same length of time. Sex, any way you take it, has become to me like those restaurants where you pay so much and eat all you want of everything in sight; you find that you don't eat half as much as you would in some other restaurant; your appetite is spoiled by bad technique. There's too much soup, meat and pie all around you; your plate is constantly replenished. The country today is like such a restaurant. The theatre, books, movies, church sermons, lecture platforms, newspapers and conversation are sex, sex, sex. The moment you come back home on a steamer and get near the Statue of Liberty a flock of newspaper photographers descend on the ship and begin snapping pictures of girls with their skirts up to their navels; the moment you land, the sex-haunted customs men dig down among your undershirts and socks for copies of dirty books; the moment you get to where you live again the elevator boy wants to know if you brought back any French post-cards; and the first things you find in your accumulated mail are a joint subscription offer of *True Confessions,* the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and *Art Studies,* a touch in behalf of some home for

wayward girls, an advertising calendar with Greta Garbo's picture on it, and a dozen catalogues from 'curiosa' book dealers."

"If the theatre and its surplus of sex bothers you so much, why don't you stay away from it?" Lorinda wanted to know.

"It's too late; the damage is already done!" O'Hara sighed.

"But you even go to the theatre when you're not working, when you're abroad on a holiday. What is the sense of that?"

"The sense is obvious," he vouchsafed, facetiously blowing his nose. "There are important matters to be studied and important things to be learned. For example—and how about another little drink, incidentally, sister?—a studious survey of European theatrical conditions has convinced me of one thing and that is that there is a lot of pretty bum champagne being produced in France these days and that the beer in Germany, while certainly nothing to make faces at, still isn't up to the standard of Hauptmann's and Sudermann's heyday. True enough, there are certain theatres in Germany where the brands on sale in the lobby are in the best tradition of classic entertainment, but there are others where what you get is a sad decline from the palmy days. I am speaking, mind you, of theatrical conditions alone. The state of affairs in other quart-

ers is more prosperous. For example, there is a place just around the corner from one of Reinhardt's Berlin theatres where the beer is so tasty that, after say eighteen or twenty *Seidel* of it, one is moved to drop into the café several blocks away, near the Kleinestheater, where the same brand is on tap but where the *Seidel* are somewhat larger.

"While theatrical conditions are not all that one might wish for in Berlin—the beer at no less than three important theatres is slightly too warm and at not less than two others a bit too cold—the situation in Munich, Stuttgart and Dresden, particularly in Munich, is much more encouraging. In these cities, the lager itself, as well as its keeping and service, is genuinely artistic. While not detracting from the dramatic manuscripts that are put on as adjuncts to it, it offers its own *raison d'être* (as the Alsatians put it) in its detraction of the critical attention from the actors. I don't say that there aren't some German actors who are not very talented; what I imply is that there are a whole lot more that several quarts of Lowenbräu help a great deal. But while, as I have indicated, the beer generally is all and even much more than any American deserves, something seems to be lacking. Maybe it is that the imports of Pilsner from Bohemia are not as large as they used to be. For when all is said and done, and with a due and most profound obeis-

sance to Spatenbräu, Hofbräu, Pschorrbräu, Culmbacher, Würzburger, Mathäserbräu, Löwenbräu, Augustinerbräu, Hackerbräu, Kochelbräu and all the other estimable German malt tonics, it was and is Pilsner, an alien brew, that made and make Germany what it is. No man who has ever drunk Pilsner, that topaz nonesuch, can ever be enchanted by anything else, however hypnotic. So I suppose theatrical conditions in Czechoslovakia must be better than anywhere else in Europe.

"In France, as I have hinted, much of the champagne is of the Impressionistic school. The labels are the same as in the great days of Rostand, Bataille, Hervieu and Porto-Riche, but the product is amateurish. Here and there, if one is sufficiently experienced in the matter of the Paris theatres and their environs, one may capture a bottle of authentic vintage, but what is dispensed generally to visiting critics tastes as if it came from Ile de Staten. To enjoy the most dramatic French champagnes one must review the English theatre, for London is where the best is sent. The English drama may be in the doldrums, but certainly the English theatre isn't. The bar in it is still producing some very elegant stuff. Even my nurse informed me it wasn't the fault of the liquor I drank there.

"As for the Italian theatre, I don't like chianti.

"But to return to the French. Say what you will

about the French theatre, it shows better sense when it comes to revues and music shows than any other theatre. As I have been observing now for a long time, no sane man can enjoy a revue or a musical show unless he has something more under his belt than his undershirt. The French see to it that he has and are duly rewarded by his going back home and proclaiming that never anywhere has he seen such shows as the French put on. As a result, the sagacious French revue producers clean up big every year by selling Ziegfeld, George White and Archie Selwyn wonders that those gentlemen only imagined they saw and that, when they look at them later on in the cold Broadway light, usually turn out to be things they themselves put on ten years before and had forgotten all about in the meantime. As I have said, however, the Frenchman knows his business, and that is part of it. Give me enough good champagne, maybe four or five bottles, and even a French chorus girl without any clothes on looks like Marilyn Miller with all her clothes on to me. And give me half a dozen ponies of cognac afterward, readily obtainable in any Paris revue house, and I am ready to enjoy immoderately all the vaudeville acts that I saw and was bored to death by on the Pantages Circuit fifteen years ago.

"Theatrical conditions in Hungary, as far as I

investigated them, showed a lamentable decline in the quality of the Tokay. The drama has suffered seriously as a consequence. The Tokay of pre-war days is apparently no more; the species currently available seems to have no more body than a Lajos Biro comedy. It doesn't taste bad, but neither, for that matter, do certain brands of tooth-paste. It even has some of its former mellowness. But something is wrong with it. Perhaps those twenty or thirty glasses of Prunelle de l'Isère I had before sampling it may have had something to do with it."

"I suppose now you've worked yourself up to such a pitch of homesickness that you want another highball," Lorinda remarked drily.

"I shall overlook the irony," O'Hara observed, not without magnanimity, "and do you the honor of accepting. While your gracious hands are occupied with the decanter, I shall return to seriousness and ask you to reflect on the plays of a recent New York season and the effect they have had on me. It won't be necessary for me to name them by name; you'll recognize most of them at once. I'll state the nature of them exactly, literally and accurately and bid you meditate their influence upon my current mood, regarding which you seem to be peculiarly full of wonder.

"This, then, is the dose I've swallowed: a play in which an act of adultery was implied to be in

exciting progress in a room adjoining the one before the audience's eyes; a play in which an apparently willing and eager young married woman went to a hotel with a man not her husband for purposes of adultery; another in which a man openly tried to seduce a young girl; a play in which a married man brought his mistress into his home that he might have her handy; one in which a young girl realistically showed symptoms of being with illegitimate child; a play in which a flapper was seduced by her own father; a play in which three married women took on three young boys as gigolos; another in which a rape was realistically attempted before the audience; another in which there was a scene between an old pervert and his young quarry; a play in which a male went after a female breathing like a lecherous bull; one in which a young woman who defended her excessive sexual promiscuity was offered as a sympathetic heroine; one in which a boy's lascivious and degenerate mother carried on under his and her husband's nose with her paramour; a play in which a married woman with a grown son enjoyed an affair with a man younger than her husband; a play in which a young woman, itching for a sexual experience, took on a tramp who casually happened by her house; a play in which a young girl married to an old man deliberately had a child by a younger man; one in

which a white woman had an affair with a Chinaman; a play in which a respected lawyer entered into a liaison with his most personable client and another in which a man invaded a house and immediately seduced one of the willing lady guests; a play in which the heroine very agreeably had an impromptu baby; one in which the hero defended himself as a pimp and lived openly with his women; a play in which a sex-starved young woman deliberately went out and got what she hankered for; another in which a young wife committed adultery in order to get a job in the movies; another in which a man carried on sexually with the madam of a bawdy-house, to the delight of the half-dozen fancy-women residents; still another in which a middle-aged woman tried to seduce a young boy, and another still in which a girl-child urged a middle-aged man to deflower her; a play in which a scene of seduction was elaborately acted out in full view of the customers; one in which an old woman had a protracted affair with a young man; a play in which a young woman had an affair with her old suitor's young valet; one in which a married woman grabbed her chauffeur and insisted he get familiar with her person; one in which young boys openly discussed their peccadilloes with women; one in which a woman and a man were in a locked room for purposes of illicit intercourse;

a play in which a married woman deliberately hied herself to a bachelor's apartment for sex purposes; four plays in which a man realistically attempted the virtue of a girl; a play in which a boy seduced the housemaid; another in which several old men carried on with the girls in a fast-house; another in which a young boy and girl indulged in sexual intercourse and in which the girl became with child and was defended by her parents; a play in which a woman waxed eloquent over the virtues of promiscuity; a play in which a woman lasciviously teased a man and drove him crazy with passion in order to subjugate him; one in which the heroine had innumerable affairs and was openly coveted by an octogenarian lecher; one in which a man pawed a young woman with rabbity intent; a play in which a young woman had sexual intercourse with a goat; a play in which a young Englishman coveted the mistress of a Chinaman; another in which a woman insisted upon a man's taking her immediately; another yet in which a young woman ran away from home, had an affair that ended with child and came back home and boasted about it; another still in which a nymphomaniac went to a brothel and took on a Chinaman; a play in which a married man seduced his chauffeur's wife; a play in which a lustful man tortured a sentimental man with accounts of his sexual success with the woman the latter

loved; a play in which a young woman proposed to a man that he seduce her without further ado in her own home; a play in which a white man stole a colored mistress from her black lover; one in which a young girl married to a cripple and needing sexual relief took on a lusty sailor; one in which a married woman forced her way into a man's bedroom in a night-dress with a view to sacrificing her virtue; another in which a married man defended his mistress against his wife; still another in which a lumberjack tore the chemise off a young girl and tried forcibly to gazump her; a play in which an old woman, a guest in the house of a man and his mistress, prayed that a young man would soon ravish her; a play in which a young man enjoyed illicit relations with a married woman and in which an old Lesbian made a play for young girls; one in which a young girl was debauched by a young man and had a baby by him; another in which a man exhibited violent symptoms of his unquenchable lust for a young woman; a play in which an old woman with a concupiscent mind led on a doddering old man; a play in which a naked yellow girl employed all her physical resources to get a white man into her grip; one in which a young white girl took on a number of South Africans; a play in which a young married woman went sex-crazy and seduced a clergyman; a play in which a girl

told the man who coveted her body that she would gladly surrender at once to his importunities; a play in which a girl insisted that what a man could do a girl could also do, and just as often; one in which a slatternly boarding-house keeper took on a series of boarders; one in which a drunken sea-captain invaded the bedroom of a sixteen-year-old girl; one in which a woman refused to leave a bachelor's rooms unless he gave himself to her; a play in which a woman frothed at the mouth in excitement upon seeing a man in the bathtub; one in which a big nigger chased and raped a little negress; one in which a young girl was hunted down by several old roués; one in which a half-naked woman was grabbed by a half-naked man and dragged off into the woods; one in which two young girls boasted of their carnalities; a play in which one man went to bed with another's girl; a play in which two married women competed with each other for the physical favors of a Frenchman; one in which a woman of fifty tried to trick a young boy into sex relations with her; one laid entirely in a bagnio, with appropriate physical exercises; one in which a woman entertained her lover in her husband's house; another in which a Chinaman locked a white flapper in a room and tried to seduce her; another in which a married woman took on a house-guest under her husband's eyes; one in which a young girl was forcibly carried upstairs by

a man with obvious intent; another in which a bachelor entertained his illegitimate children by three different women; a play in which a young girl had two lovers simultaneously; one dealing with the love affairs of a nance; another with those of a female invert; another—but I'm running out of breath; there's no need to go on.

"Morals or merit have nothing to do with case. It's simply a case of sex, sex, sex without let-up! Sex repeated, repeated, repeated! One apparently can't get away from it. Leave the drama and go to a musical show or revue and all you see are a lot of naked women who look like powdered Hamburg steaks and sketches built around either the one about the traveling salesman and the chambermaid or the one about the sailor and the deaf blonde. Leave the musical show and the revue and go to a burlesque show and all you get are a troupe of undressed women displaying their flesh to you from a runway and the act in which a frankfurter is employed as a phallic symbol. Leave the burlesque show and go to the movies and all you see is gum-sucking, attempted seduction, so-called bathing girls showing all they've got and a mess of Clara Bows shaking their thighs at you. Sex, sex, and more sex. And you still wonder why I feel as I do! No, sister, sex holds no charms for this baby!"

"Well," thought Lorinda, bitterly biting her lip and handing O'Hara his hat, "that's that."

## CHAPTER XV

It was seven months later, while making a tour of the battlefields in France, that Lorinda met Captain Lester Horling. The Captain—he had served honorably throughout the war in that branch of the service commissioned to make moving pictures for the United States Government's historical records—had achieved a nation-wide reputation for himself not only as a writer of vivid war novels, the heroes of which, thinly disguised as himself, were invariably the first over the top, but also as a military and diplomatic strategic critic and a commentator and lecturer on the state and condition of his country in its post-war incarnation.

The Captain—he wished to be known always as the Captain, he informed his publisher's publicity department—had lost an ear in Belleau Wood when a can of celluloid film had exploded and was, for this reason and some other that no one had thus far been able to make out, since he gruffly refused to divulge its nature, something of a cynic. His cynicism gained for him the sobriquet of Hard-boiled Horling, which may be said to have been not entirely distasteful to him. Having laid down

his ear for the safety of democracy, it was natural and reasonable that democracy should fail of some of its erstwhile glamour for him and that the country that had rewarded him for his heroism with only two skimpy silver bars should be prepared to suffer the consequences. His novels, accordingly, were bitter with a realism that included elaborate and horrendous descriptions not only of disemboweled privates with their entrails trailing behind them but of all the French privies north of Coucy-le-Château, and were rich in allusions to the male offspring of female dogs, the alkaline excrement of beasts, men born out of wedlock, males given to exotic sexual practices and women of a pecuniary anatomical disposition. On every page—emphasizing the futility of it all—were dying men's cries of pain, charred bodies, bloody faces, flea-bitten mules, filthy mud-holes, stinking stretchers, aching brains, protruding eyes, twitching agonies, disease, groans and dull thuds. Beside the Captain, the MM. Duhamel, Latzko, Barbusse, Ewart, Cummings and Dos Passos were so many sentimentalists,—"schoolgirls mistaking their vaccination scars for war wounds," the Captain dubbed them. The Captain was not of that cut, take his word for it! With him, a spade was a spade. He was the He to masculinity that God is to theology. He had hair not only on his chest but

in his nose and ears, and Go-to-hell was his reveille and taps. When accused of lack of patriotism he would retort, "The most patriotic American I know, a man whose one hundred per cent is doubted by no one, has for the last twenty-five years worked like a galley-slave so that he might spend his annual vacation in Europe." When his loyalty was questioned, he would snort, "Loyalty!", and remark that a nation apparently demands as the first attribute of a citizen precisely that quality that the citizen most venerates in his dog. "As an American patriot in high standing," he was in the habit of observing ironically, "and as one who believes in the honor, valor and ethical preëminence of his country, there is something that frequently embarrasses me. It generally occurs to me when, during the passing of The Flag in a solemn and sumptuous parade, I duly uncover my head and catch a bad cold. Why was it *necessary* for Captain Jack Phillip, of the *Texas*, to cry out to his men: 'Don't cheer, fellows, the poor devils are dying'?"

By subtle way of explaining various detractions of himself on the part of certain literary critics who offensively hinted, in their reviews of his war novels, that, so far as his knowledge of the actual firing line went, he had obviously been in the position of General Sheridan without a horse, he proclaimed, "Among the more striking propensities of

the American, and what further sets him apart from the specimens of other nations, is his overpowering impulse to disparage and ridicule his fellow Americans who have come into eminence of one kind or another. In no other country is this impulse so deeply ingrained or so widespread. Here in the United States one sees it daily in resplendent bloom. There is hardly a public figure who doesn't serve as a tail for a tin can. The American elects to support his self-esteem and to bathe himself in his own imagination as a somebody by making actual somebodies appear to himself as nobodies, or at least as fellows with two Achilles' heels apiece and somewhat dubious. Not only is this the case with his public leaders and his artists, but—and this is the more significant—with men who are his popular heroes in so far as he may really be said to have any popular heroes. A heavyweight champion like Tunney is thus made the target of derision because he admits that he likes to read books. A football hero like Red Grange is thus privately hooted at because he resorts to the movies, as another boy might resort to the bond business, to make some easy money. A tennis champion like Tilden is snickered at because he gets some fun out of acting on the stage between tournaments. A baseball hero like Hornsby is monkey-nosed because he likes to play the ponies. A film hero like Valentino

or Gilbert is made the butt of jest because women admire him. A Dempsey is mocked because he gets married to a pretty girl and, after his nose has been broken, has it set into symmetrical place again. And a Lindbergh already begins to feel the first symptoms of what will doubtless soon be a pervasive derision because he doesn't smoke or drink. It doesn't matter what any of these do; the impulse to decry them is immediately observable. If they did nothing at all, reasons for decrying them would be dredged up or invented just the same. And as it is with them, so it is with superior men in other directions: with Henry Ford, for instance, the greatest business genius in the country, with J. P. Morgan, one of the most astute financiers, and with Rear-Admiral Bradley Fiske, the shrewdest and least buncombed naval officer. The American hates the superior man, in whatever field his superiority may lie, as a rat hates poison. The very fact of the man's superiority he regards as a reflection upon himself and upon his own relatively lower status, and so he exerts himself to the utmost to reduce that man's superiority, or at least the prevailing sense and idea of the superiority, in his own eyes and in those of his fellow Americans. This is one of the outstanding characteristics and phenomena of our democracy: the impulse toward and technique of equalization in the reducing of the

higher to the level of the lower. It accounts for the spoofing of musicians, painters, literary men and poets. It accounts for the mudslinging at public figures, the scandals of the pink and yellow press and the jokes and sneers at royalty. It even accounts, one may believe, for the increasing spread of agnosticism."

On such occasions as he suspected that his own somewhat obstreperous he-mannishness was being regarded with inner smirks, he was in the habit of diverting the issue to his fellow-countrymen in general: "I am told by visiting foreigners that the first thing they observe in America is the unnecessary trouble that the star-spangled male goes to to convince everyone in sight that he is excessively he, a fellow with moss on his chest, a psychical tobacco chewer and a guy capable of looking any man in the eye and telling him to go to hell. It's seldom, they assure me, that the American permits his masculinity to be taken for granted; always he must emphasize it in one way or another lest the fact of it escape his audience. The American's suspicion of all artists, musicians and poets in particular, is simply an oblique proof of the foreigners' contention, and a more positive proof is to be had in the promiscuous embellishment of even his casual conversation with cuss words, in his miscellaneous and often dismaying expectorations, in his derision

of tea as a beverage, in his dictated love letters and in his fear of wearing a red tie. The American, it would seem, however much of a truck-driver he may be, still rests uneasy—for a reason that is unfathomable—over hypothetical doubts as to his manly virtue. Since such professions as those of, say, interior decorator, dressmaker, ballet master or hair-dresser—freely entered into by perfectly masculine foreigners—are associated in his mind with effeminacy, the average democrat would rather starve to death than be caught in any one of them. He shrinks, like a cotton undershirt, from even the faintest danger of being thought a lizzie. In order to stress before the world that he is a hard-boiled, red-blooded guy with no pink in him he engages in more unnecessary fights, wears more unpressed pants and says goddam oftener than any other male on earth."

And, in the same way, when anyone derogatorily mentioned the American Legion, he would slyly offer himself in contrast as a superior sort of arbiter elegantiarum by observing that the members of the late Expeditionary Force were the only Americans who have ever gone to Europe, mingled with Europeans and, resistful of influences, returned home with worse manners than those they went over with.

As for his attitude toward America and Ameri-

cans in general, his book entitled, "A Bird's-Eye View of Worms," gives a sufficient inkling. The quotation of several passages will serve to indicate the tenor:

§ 1

The American in the mass is always psychically against something. This attitude is doubtless bred of an oblique hostility to his own native surroundings. Unconsciously, for all his outward chauvinism, he resents them in one or more directions and this resentment, though unsuspected by himself, he takes out in an automatic and chronic animosity toward a flickering variety of particulars. Even when he is for something, his forness is not forthright and simple but is grounded upon a highly violent and indignant opposition to whatever marks the other side of the matter in hand. The European, loving his country and all it stands for with a profound and encompassing affection and hence unirritated, whether consciously or unconsciously, by it, thus seldom shares the American's psychological mood of umbrage and objection.

§ 2

What America needs are fewer rostrums and more picnic grounds. A nation that eats its sandwiches

sitting on the grass is pretty generally a peaceful and contented one.

§ 3

The American is never satisfied with what beauty may be immediately before his eyes. When he goes to the Grand Canyon, for example, he takes field-glasses with him.

§ 4

No country can call itself entirely its own whose children must look to other and strange lands for their fairy tales and fables. We have yet to have our Lewis Carroll, like England, our Grimms, like Germany, our La Fontaine, like France, or our Hans Christian Andersen, like even Denmark.

§ 5

It is perhaps worthy of note that thousands upon thousands of Americans are annually compelled to go abroad to get away from, or take vaccines to stand, their national flower.

§ 6

The most stupendously impressive and majestic scene in America is chiefly associated in the American consciousness with the fact that a man once went over it in a barrel.

## § 7

What strikes the European as particularly droll about the American is his posture of exclusiveness which takes, among other things, the form and habit of clubs. By way of making himself feel a bit superior to his human surroundings, the American breeds clubs with a minkish fecundity. An American city of any size without at least five hundred of these clubs of one sort or another is a rarity. There are more clubs, for instance, in a town the size of say, Columbus, O., than there are in the whole of France, and there are more in a village like Ellenville, N. Y., than in the whole of Spain, Portugal and Czechoslovakia combined. The club idea in the United States, as hinted, is an outgrowth of the American's desire not for comradeship and association with kindred and congenial souls so much as it is a manifestation of his desire to set himself somewhat tonily and snootily apart from his fellow Americans. This impulse is at the bottom not only of the better grade of clubs but is equally perceptible in the motive behind the clubs, societies and orders set up by plumbers, gas-fitters and barbers.

The feeling that he can blackball a fellow democrat and thereafter go home and let the idea of his

superiority sink into his wife's consciousness is immensely warming to the American. It makes him feel that he is a somebody and not of the common ruck. And when the object of his blackball sets up a club of his own the next week and in turn blackballs still another fellow democrat the feeling is equally salve to his vanity and unction to his soul. The club gives the American a bogus sense of relative aristocracy, and he revels in it.

§ 8

Another form that this itch for bogus purple takes in the American is his passion for so-called exclusive places of residence, cleverly encouraged by wily real-estate agents. As a consequence, there is hardly a fifth-rate apartment house that isn't advertised into his favor as being "exclusive" or hardly a suburban sand-lot development that isn't held out as bait to him under a "restricted" label. All that a real-estate agent has to do to lease flats in a building that has been a white elephant on his hands is to make an elaborate show of investigating Mr. Goldfarb's or Mr. Macgonigle's genealogical tree. And all that the same agent has to do to sell swamp lots at a fancy figure is cannily to give out word that only prospective purchasers who can

satisfy him as to their social credentials will be considered. The circumstance that Mr. Goldfarb, once he persuades the agent that he is one of the old Knickerbocker Goldfarbs and moves in, discovers that his next-door neighbor is Mr. Finkelstein no more disconcerts Mr. Goldfarb than Mr. Macgonigle is disconcerted by the discovery that the great aristocrat and social leader who has bought the lot next door to him is his brother Elk and Knight of Columbus, Mr. McCarthy. For both gentlemen, the M. Goldfarb and the M. Macgonigle, immediately proceed to convince themselves that the M. Finkelstein and the M. McCarthy must, by virtue of their having got in too, be even bigger swells than they themselves are.

## § 9

The American's idea of gayety is synonymous with noise. His designations of it in the vernacular, such as *whoopee* and *hoopla*, are thus relevantly derived from the shouts of cowboys and circus acrobats. He cannot conceive of gayety in a quiet sense. In this, he differs radically from the European. To him, the absence of racket that accompanies an Englishman's, a Frenchman's, an Austrian's or a German's fun is incomprehensible.

§ 10

The increasing affectation of Americans of the upper level of society may be observed in even the most trivial directions. There was a time when they called their house dogs Rover, Bruno, Fido or something of the sort—by plain, simple, orthodox dog names. Today you will have to search assiduously to find one of their pets that isn't Lord Wimbleton, Matsumai, Lady Hamilton, Victoire the Third, or Duke of Buckingham.

§ 11

The American's understanding of his fellow-men is in direct ratio to the geographical distance that separates him from them. Thus, the American of the Pacific Coast understands the American of the Middle West better than he does the American of the Atlantic seaboard. Thus the American in the aggregate understands the Englishman better than he does the Frenchman, the Frenchman better than the Russian, and the Russian better than the Chinaman. His comprehension and sympathy are wholly and entirely a matter of latitude. The Asiatic's manner of life and thought is thus as unintelligible and nonsensical to him as the cannibal's taste for

Glenna Collett, say, as against pigs' feet, a boar's head, an ox's tail, an animal's liver and kidneys, a cow's tongue and rump, a pickled eel, or the testicles of a lamb.

§ 12

This is the one country in the civilized world where a gentleman may take a lady to a public restaurant only with dire misgivings that something in the audible conversation of men at a nearby table will inevitably reach her ears with profound embarrassment and disgust.

§ 13

The theory that the faults advanced against America would be found to be faults equally of any other country—a theory lately propounded with indignant eloquence by certain of our elder critical patriots—unfortunately does not, one fears, hold water. By what other nation under the sun is a citizen, returning from abroad to his homeland, arbitrarily regarded as a thief and a liar, treated as such, and his person obstreperously paddled for evidences of his guilt? In what other country is a motorist, pausing by the wayside, arbitrarily regarded as a seducer and treated as such? In what other civilized land may a man's house be indiscriminately entered and searched for a bottle of beer? In what other

country would men, presumed to be innocent, be brought into court and to trial shackled like slave convicts? In what other country are human beings lynched and burned at Methodist picnics? In what other country may the people's pleasure places, however harmless, be arbitrarily invaded and demolished by scurrilous paid agents of the law? In what other country may a man be arrested for paying a woman's railroad fare or for owning a copy of a book on sex or for winking at a pretty girl on the street? In what other country is libel a perfectly safe practice of daily journalism? In what other country under the sun could a man like Herbert Hoover be constituted the nation's leader?

§ 14

The government of the United States, at least in its current bloom, has added to its foundational assumption that all men are created free and equal the amendment that they are simultaneously created prodigious liars. Its firm conviction of this fact is indicated, symbolically, in its reduction of faith to the point where even its trust in God has come to be confined, as a legend, to one-cent coins and, realistically, in its dismissal as worthless the solemnly sworn to affidavits of its citizen body on the annual income tax returns. The oath of truth-telling which

an American takes before a constituted agent of the law when he makes out his tax return is regarded as of no value whatsoever, and it is a rare citizen who isn't duly summoned onto the carpet each year by the authorities to be eyed suspiciously and to be cross-examined at length and minutely as to his theoretical misrepresentations and swindlings. The government assumes not that an American swears to the truth when he delivers his tax report, but that he more or less deliberately swears to a falsehood. Its entire income tax machinery is conducted upon that principle. It regards the citizen either as a downright and deliberate perjurer or as a man congenitally unable to resist mendacity. Rich and poor alike fall into the same categories; the man whose income is $5,000 or under and the one whose income runs up into the millions are equally, in the distrustful government eye, derelicts from rectitude, integrity and good faith. They are treated as if they were at least potential cheats and con men. Their word of honor is looked upon as a joke.

## § 15

That God is on the side of the Republican party is evident from the ribald manner in which He criticized the founder of the Democratic party into eternity. The shuffling off of Jefferson's mortal coil

He contrived with the star low-comedy affliction in all pathology.

§ 16

It is a characteristic of the American that, try as he will, he can never quite entirely get over the monarchical influences and traditions which persist in his blood from the blood of his forefathers. It is this fact that indubitably causes him to look askance at any one of his various rulers who conducts himself somewhat too democratically, and to view the fellow, however estimable his gifts, as being not all that he should be. The American in his heart, for all his no-saying, likes his governmental magnificoes to be of at least a deceptively aristocratic air and metaphorically to abjure checkered suits for broadcloth and felt hats for toppers. A glance at those public office-holders whom he holds in greatest esteem illustrates clearly that that esteem is founded much less upon their competence and merit than upon their approximation to so many stuffed shirts. It is thus that, in his deepest innards, he admires a McKinley above a Grover Cleveland, a Henry Cabot Lodge above a James A. Reed, and a George B. McClellan above a Jimmy Walker.

The aforementioned Jimmy provides us with an excellent clinical example of the case in point. While he is enthusiastically endorsed in all his charming

idiosyncrasies and eccentricities by the New York Irish, Jews and other such congenital Dantons and Robespierres, the maniple of Americans still left in his bailiwick have difficulty in digesting him. To them, the circumstance that he is an honest, conscientious and very meritorious mayor is lost sight of in the circumstance that he is an expert at the Black Bottom, a booster of Fannie Brice and a gent who can't be fooled by charged cigar. That a man born with a natural, unaffected, go-to-hell manner who, once elected to office, still conducts himself as simply and humanly as he previously conducted himself, can be as sound a public official as one who comports himself like a Park avenue undertaker is unbelievable to them. A Coolidge who promptly settles a Boston police strike with the manner of a schoolmaster is regarded as a statesman and a diplomat, but a Walker who equally promptly settles a New York subway strike with the manner of a fellow tossing off a cocktail is a dubious politician, and one to be watched closely.

The American snob does not cotton to the Jimmy Walkers because, as I have observed, they are at opposite pole to his notion of what wearers of symbolic purple and ermine are and should be. I say his notion, for the snob's notions are generally second-hand and twice removed from the truth. The truth is that the Jimmy Walkers, strange as it may seem,

conduct themselves very much more like actual kings and princes than the semi-callipygan posturers and affected mountebanks in our public offices for whom the American snob reserves his admiration and respect. If Jimmy Walker likes musical shows with pretty girls in them, the King of England likes them no less and hasn't the slightest hesitancy in sitting right down front at them in preference to Ibsen, Strindberg and Granville Barker. If Jimmy Walker likes to stay up at night and shake a leg on the dance floors of cabarets, the Prince of Wales likes to do the same thing. If Jimmy Walker would rather go to the races than to a Y. M. C. A. lecture, so would King Alfonso. If Jimmy Walker prefers fancy clothes to staid apparel, so do Crown Prince Carol of Roumania and Prince Christopher of Greece. If Jimmy Walker knows a lot of actresses and dancers, and is a patron of sport, and once in a while pulls a saucy nifty, and is occasionally exaggeratedly democratic, so was Edward VII. If Jimmy Walker likes his licker when he likes it, so has almost every King, Kaiser, Emperor or Czar who ever lived. If Jimmy Walker once wrote a popular song called "Will You Love Me in December As You Did in May?"—and it was a terrible one—, Frederick the Great wrote one called "Blue Eyes, Fair Eyes" that was just as god-awful. And if too many people familiarly call Jimmy Walker by

his first name, too many, it seems to me, do the same thing with Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

His opinions on his fellow-countrymen, indeed, were rarely what might be termed complimentary. It wasn't that many of them were not well-taken, perhaps eminently sound and entirely justifiable; it was rather that they seemed to proceed much more greatly from the thought of his missing ear, so vainly sacrificed upon the altar of freedom, than from a somewhat less biological and more cerebral metaphysic.

It was to the Captain's credit, however, even in the eyes of those who objected most violently to his doctrines, that he generally played fair. If there was something good to be said for his country and his countrymen, he was not averse to saying it, however much pain the admission gave him. "The country makes me sick," he would say, "but I take it as I take castor oil. It's a fine dose to get the bile out of one's system. Europe, with its higher civilization, constipates one. America is an automatic physic. Like a physic, however unpleasant, it has, as I've said, its virtues."

"The trouble with most of the American critics of America," he would observe, "is not that they don't travel enough, but that they don't travel in

the right places. Lewis takes a bus ride through rural England and promptly concludes that because the inn-keeper he happens to encounter at Swaffham is politer than the hotel-keeper in Sauk Centre the manners of Englishmen in Leeds must be better than those of Americans in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Mencken idiotically spends a scorching hot summer in Arkansas and Tennessee, sweats himself to death and brings himself to the profound conclusion that civilization is cooler and more comfortable and *Kultur* more elegant in Newfoundland. Nathan, the near-Beerbohm, spends a couple of months in Paris, never moving outside a radius of eight blocks in any direction from the Arc de Triomphe, and, because he happens to see a member of the Academy sitting in front of a café with a cutie on his lap or a member of the Chamber of Deputies with his arms around another, imagines that Frenchmen aren't hypocrites and that Americans, who do not conduct their petting parties on the sidewalks, are. Villard takes a look at Heidelberg, sees the youths reading Hegel and Schlegel, concludes that nobody in Germany wastes time on such trivialities as *Simplicissimus*, and that the trouble with American civilization is that *Judge*, *Life* and *College Humor* have twenty thousand readers for every subscriber to the *Nation*. Upton Sinclair goes to Boston, talks to three policemen, half a dozen Socialists, several

sewer diggers and a couple of Italian banana-stand operators who used to play cards on Saturday night with Sacco and Vanzetti and decides that culture in Boston is up an alley. Harry Elmer Barnes goes to Doorn, is entertained by the Kaiser at a swell dinner consisting of *gewürzte Anchovis, Krebsschwänze mit Sardellenbutterschnittchen, frischer Spargel mit Rheinlachsbeilage, marinierte Seemuscheln, Ochsenmaulsalat, Wald-Erdbeeren mit Sahne* and *Apfelschmarrn mit Aprikosensauce*, to say nothing of *Neufchateller, alter Holländer* and *Yoghurt Käse*—the whole moistened by Marcobrunner, Rudesheimer Berg, Schloss Johannisberger and some excellent Pilsner, and decides that German democracy is an awful mistake. And Ludwig Lewisohn makes a trip to Palestine and finds that there is no such anti-Semitism there as exists in the Union League Club.

"Such critical *chekakos*, though they often show some signs of sense, more often give me a pain in an unmentionable locality. Their comparisons and deductions are on a par with those of Cook's tourists. They understand America and the American about as little as, say, an Englishman understands or sympathizes with the American's immersion of himself in business. The circumstance that the American works at his trade many hours a day more than he himself does, the Englishman has trouble in reason-

ing out. Why the American doesn't play more, as he does, he can't comprehend. The fact, of course, is that the American in general regards business as sport; building up his business and making money are to him largely what games are to the Englishman. Aside from a relatively few golf players, the American business man in the aggregate has the same kind of fun working himself into riches that the Englishman has working himself into a snappy cricket player.

"The point is that the people of one nation always misunderstand those of another nation, whether they're professional critics or just amateurs. The only foreign critic who has come anywhere near understanding America in the last thirty years is the Frenchman Siegfried—and that's a hell of a name for a Frenchman! Take even the misunderstanding that exists abroad about the American traveler. The European doesn't know that the primary difference between the American and the European traveler is that the former travels for pleasure and the latter for business or professional reasons. Nine Americans out of ten who go abroad do so purely for amusement, whereas nine out of ten Englishmen, Frenchmen or Germans who come over here do so because they have business of one sort or another to transact. In this difference doubtless lies the reason for the Europeans' misunder-

standing of the American traveler abroad. The European, failing to comprehend that he is simply off on a lark, can't figure him out and fathom him and, consequently, he impresses the European as simply an objectionable waster and loafer, and as an intruder upon a serious, working people. If 100,000 Englishmen or Frenchmen or Germans were to come to America every Summer and spend the days idly riding around in taxicabs and getting tight, we'd look upon them exactly as they now look upon Americans doing much the same thing in their countries.

"You can say all you want to say against the American—and you can say a lot that catches him where he lives—but there are some things that, if I have to say it myself, aren't so bad about him. For example, there is this to be said for him individually: however distasteful the result in certain instances may be, one at least knows exactly what he thinks, says, means and purposes to do. There is little hypocrisy in his speech, however much there may be in his politics and social philosophy. What is in and on his mind comes directly out of his mouth. This is hardly true of the average Englishman, Frenchman, Austrian, Italian, Spaniard, Swiss, Belgian or Dutchman. Only the German and, to a degree, the Swede, resemble the American in this respect."

It was this quality of relative open-mindedness and fairness in the Captain that Lorinda, after her fill of Morton, Norton and other such absurdly arbitrary Babbitt baiters and Main-Street mockers, had long admired.

"Tell me," she said to him as he extricated her from a shell-hole in the Compiègne into which she had tumbled the while her mind dwelt upon her hapless amorous adventures of the last two years, "what do *you* think of literature and love."

"Show me a woman with a book in her bedroom and I'll show you a woman who is neither satisfied nor happy," he answered.

Lorinda slowly repeated to herself what he had said. A smile crossed her features. It was a smile of prophetic complacency.

## CHAPTER XVI

"Look at this once fair countryside, devastated by madness and imbecility!", Horling ejaculated after a suitable pause, playing the Heroic Polonaise with his voice. "When the next war comes, let us stop and meditate that soldiers always march to the sound of wind through a chestnut instrument and to the reverberations of the membrane of a goat!"

He glanced at Lorinda satisfiedly to note the effect of his fine irony, but Lorinda seemed at the moment to be busily occupied in thinking of something else. Undeterred, Horling continued:

"It takes a pretty imagination to share the optimism of those who believe that the various leagues, alliances, conferences and mystic backslappings currently being indulged in as a step to end wars will succeed in their lofty purpose. Wars may no more be got rid of by such means than smallpox or lumbago may be got rid of by calling meetings. All the cool, calm, hard common-sense and wisdom in the world can't change human nature and its impulses, and leagues of nations, with the best of intentions, can't alter what has been unalterable since the

second primordial man, for a reason that may have been good or bad, cracked the first man over the head with a club. Man's impulse to fight has its birth not in the cerebrum but down in the dark cellars of his emotional being, and nothing is going to get it into an elevator. The notion that war may be averted by limiting armament is ridiculous. We need only refer to history to appreciate that wars are and have often been started by nations with armament inferior to that of the enemy. In any speakeasy, it is generally the little fellow who starts the scrap. In the whole log of Jack's restaurant and out of thousands of bellicose customers who had to be handled by the bouncer, the records showed that not more than half a dozen of the ejectees weighed over one hundred and thirty-five pounds. The theory, further, that the invention of such dismayingly malefic and sinister devices as the death-ray and the like will go a long way toward discouraging war is equally hollow. The invention of the big-bore cannon and of poison gas, just as dismaying in their day, didn't discourage war any more than the invention of the guillotine, the scaffold and the electric chair have discouraged murder, or than the invention of safety matches put an end to arson.

"It's a platitude that wars are started by inflaming the emotions of a people. Inflammation of the emotions is one of the most pleasurable phenomena

that a people experiences, whether it's induced by romantic love, booze, an appeal to the fighting impulse or what not. If war is to be ended, therefore, a means must be hit upon to inflame a people's emotions in a relatively analogous, if oblique, direction but with a relatively analogous thrill and satisfaction. This, obviously, can't be done by calling together representatives in a hall in Switzerland some 3,500 miles away or by getting a few civilians to shake hands in a London hotel or a Hague basilica. The business, if it is to be negotiated at all, must be negotiated spectacularly, romantically, in a way that will appeal to the people's imagination as strongly as the marching of brightly figged-out soldiers, the flying of brilliant banners, the rattle of inspiriting drums and the melodramatic sound of cannon. The day that sees moves toward peace marked with the same thrilling spectacularity and romance that mark moves toward war will see the day of war's end—but not before.

"It's this all-important point that the delegated fixers presently overlook and so waste their time and accomplish nothing. They can hold meetings in the remote Alps until Kingdom come and no more succeed in averting war than they can succeed, by the same process, in averting joy-rides and *crim. con.* They are trying to repeal psychology by passing motions and reading minutes. What they

should do, if they had any practical sense, is to make a move to end war by replacing one psychological and emotional reaction with another and stronger and more fetching one. Or at least with one that would be as appealing, as luxuriant, as exciting and as ecstatic as the other. In different words, the taste for war must be diminished just as the taste for whiskey is by the beer cure, that is, by the *similia similibus* technique. Diplomacy to abolish war must be embellished with all the excitements and kick that attend the inauguration of war. The people must be worked up to the same pitch of hysteria by the agencies operating against war as they are worked up to by agencies operating toward war. And it can't be done after the present drab, dull and dispiriting formula. You can't appeal to a nation's imagination with a lot of frock coats, spats, parliamentary procedure and pitchers of ice-water. How the job can be done I fear I can't say; however, I modestly offer a suggestion. Like many sound suggestions, this one has a superficially clownish air, but I pass it on, nevertheless. At its worst, its aspect of jocosity is no worse than, and it is perhaps just as fundamentally workable and sound as, the Trojan horse, the strategy of Birnam Wood, the crossing of the Delaware and the traveling salesmanship of Colonel Lindbergh.

"What I propose, in simple, as I've already hinted,

is that nations go to diplomacy, so to speak, just as they now go to war. When a conference of representatives, diplomatists, ambassadors, bankers, backslappers, ear-greasers and assorted whisperers is called, let all the black cutaway coats, pepper and salt trousers, silk hats, boiled shirts and other such uninflammatory regalia be hung up in the closet and let the delegates be dressed in the fanciest of the nation's military uniforms, and with at least three ostrich plumes to each hat. Let there be brass bands, big parades, confetti and hot dogs. Let a cannon be fired off at every street corner along the line of march. Let there be button-hole badges on sale everywhere inscribed with such legends as *Remember Balfour!, To Hell with Briand!, Talk 'Em Silly, Bozo!, Bring Home the Bacon!,* and *Louder and Funnier!* Let there be firecrackers, roman candles, sky-rockets and pin-wheels. Let the whistles blow and the bells ring. Let everybody get plastered. Then see to it that all the larger cities in the land get a chance to enjoy something of the same show. Have subsidiary leagues of nations, conferences and meetings in different places instead of confining them, as at present, to a far-away European hole in the wall. Have the reports of their debates chronicled on score-boards in front of the newspaper offices as football and baseball scores are currently chronicled. Start pools and handbooks on the daily

gabble runs. Declare public holidays while the argument is going on; have flags displayed from every window; start bonfires along the roads. . . . The plan might not conceivably work, since nothing is certain in this world, but I daresay it would at least work better than the present one will."

He glanced at Lorinda again, but still she seemed to be thinking of something else. Again undeterred, he proceeded:

"The trouble with the American, however, is that any new idea, however sound and valuable it may be, seems as dubious and even comical to him as a new style in English trousers. He swallows every new idea in a mechanical direction, however bogus, hook, line and sinker; let someone so much as announce that he has invented a new way to shave yourself or a new way to start an automobile or a new kind of collar-button and the American will rush out without stopping for breakfast in order to scrutinize and buy the dingus. But let him read in his morning paper that someone has devised a new theory of relativity or electrobiology and he'll let out a horselaugh and order up two more cups of coffee. The truth of the matter is that the American is simply a romantic woman with a flask in his hind-pocket. He is a child with a two days' growth of beard. He is the most romantic and sentimental sucker going, mentally, emotionally and practically.

Take the way he looks at his heroes, for example. The Englishman demands of one of his heroes merely that he did a job brilliantly well in one direction or another; that is enough. And the same with the German and to a great degree even the emotional Frenchman. But the American demands of his hero not only that he managed the brilliant job but that he conducted himself, during its doing, like a matinée idol. He has no use for a hero, even one of the first calibre, who isn't superficially picturesque. That's why such relatively prosaic but vastly intelligent and gallant fellows as General Nathaniel Greene, in the Revolutionary War, and General George Gordon Meade, in the Civil, occupy so small a place in the American's esteem and why, on the other hand, such flashy boys as General Phil Schuyler in the former war and Stonewall Jackson in the latter occupy so large a one.

"To the American *jivaros*, the popular hero off the stage must be as fancy and noble a personage as the popular hero on. Appreciating this and catering to the public's desire, newspaper correspondents always either write the lines for him, often to the hero's own esoteric surprise and profound gratification, or shrewdly edit and amend the lines he actually speaks. The Associated Press has thus glamourously made more theoretical heroes plausibly heroic than all the present-day playwrights this side of

Tokio. It made Dewey talk like a Hal Reid hero; it served up to Roosevelt choice titbits in the Bronson Howard manner; it gave Whittlesey romantic speeches out of Anthony Hope; it published of General Lawton that 'he died with the name of God on his lips,' when—as his realistic orderly, in later years Sergeant McClure of the Marines, has hinted—what the General actually said consisted of just three words, to wit and simply, 'Jesus, I'm shot!' "

He once more stole a look at Lorinda, but as before her thoughts seemed to be in quite another quarter. Being a polite fellow and not wishing to disturb her, he went on:

"The romantic sentimentality of the American spreads in all directions. He openly romanticizes everything, in fact, but love, as I noted in one of my books. He is afraid to romanticize love, as I wrote, because he is afraid, for all his ingrained romantic sentimentality, to be taken for a sentimental fellow. He buys and plays on his phonograph, in the secrecy of his home, more June moon and lilac-time songs than any other man on earth, and he cuts out and hangs on his wall more lithographs of fabulous cuties, but mention sentiment or love to him on the street and he'll haw-haw derisively. He'd be as ashamed to be caught kissing a girl as he'd be to be caught wearing lavendar silk underpants."

Lorinda was brought back from her erstwhile abstraction with a pleasurable jolt. Or it might perhaps more accurately be said that Horling's words began to approach the hidden content of her abstraction, though not yet any too definitely, and to convert it into the material of a possible duet. Tickled, she was about to encourage him by all means to continue, when he persisted:

"The American, as I say, sentimentalizes everything but what is genuinely and honestly worthy of sentiment. He is like a valentine being constantly delivered on Labor Day. He cries tenderly over any sloppy poem about a dog and then passes laws muzzling every dog in sight. He weeps when the radio exudes a mammy song and then calls his old colored scrub-woman a dirty nigger and bawls the hell out of her. He gets drunk and tells everybody around him what a great little woman his wife is and how much he loves her and then goes home and flops into his twin bed.

"Speaking of drunks, think of his sentimentalization of even the old bygone corner saloon! To it, he attributes a romance and glamour that are meant to make all strong men break down and drip nostalgic tears in recollection. And what are the facts? As a matriculate of the institution for more than a quarter of a century and as long an eager drinker at its fonts of knowledge, I have the honor to an-

nounce that the aforesaid sentimentalist is dispensing a lot of wawa. The old saloon was a tip-top gathering place, a club? For whom? In its more lavish phases, for a number of established stews who were ungodly nuisances, who insistently draped themselves on one's shoulders, slobbered idiotic gasconade and drove one out when one might have wished to tarry. In its less gaudy phases, for hackmen, longshoremen, coons and such whose company at the bar one could stand for the period of only a quick guzzle. The old saloon was a lovely and enchanting palazzo, brilliant in polished mahogany and dazzling in mirror and glass? News for one's grandmother! There were a few such, perhaps five or six in the whole country, but the overwhelming majority of them were, if the truth must be told, pretty sad specimens. And even the exceptions, like the celebrated garish Silver Dollar, were surely far removed from the realm of aesthetics. Some of the big hotel bars, like the Knickerbocker in New York, say, or the Bellevue-Stratford in Philadelphia, were soothing to the eye, but they hardly came under the head of what the sentimental hangovers wish us to regard as the quondam corner comfort-station.

"When the lachrymose gentry speak of the passing of the old saloon, what they really mean to speak of is the passing of the old-time, pre-Prohibition German restaurant, places like Molitor's, the Hof-

bräu and Kieferle's in Cleveland, Schneider's and the Fuchshöle in Baltimore, Zeiss' in Philadelphia, Lüchow's, Weber's and Scheffel Hall in New York, and all their happy kind. Those, young lady, were havens! There one might sit leisurely with one's cronies and revel in the grandeur of the world. There one might drink, converse and yodel like gentlemen, not like bar bums. There, were peace and quiet and contentment and unction to the soul. There, were the real gathering places, the real clubs —the realest that we veterans ever knew. The old saloon, on the other hand, was simply a place to swill a quick drink and get out of. And speaking of the old saloon, it may incidentally be brought to the attention of our friends, the Prohibitionists, that more fights used to take place around the free lunch counter than around the drinking bar."

Horling paused a moment. Then—"Do you know," he said, "I am almost tempted to write an honest book on the old saloon. The only things that restrain me are the comfort it might give to the Prohibition jackasses and the thought that I'd have to discuss it with publishers. Have you ever stopped to think what a writer encounters with publishers? I've dealt with a dozen of them and it's a wonder to me that I haven't given up writing long ago. It isn't that they aren't honest; they always pay what they owe you on the dot. And it isn't that many of

them aren't good guys; I've got several friends among them that I wouldn't part with for a dollar, or maybe a dollar and a half. But, God, the way they do things, the monkeyshines they cut, their idiosyncrasies! There's Knopf, for example, not a bad fellow in his way, but look at him! When he isn't making six months' trips to Europe to sign up a lot of Guns Gunnarssens, Sigrid Axelsens, Olaf Jonsonsens, Sophus Soibergs, Ingvald Djursholms, Lief the One-Eyeds and other unreadable Scandinavians who win Nobel prizes and so may be relied upon to sell a hundred extra copies over here at a net profit of eight dollars and a quarter, he is busy trying to put over Johnny Weaver at twice the curb quotation by binding him in green Persian wallpaper and putting an elaborate announcement in the back that the type in which Johnny has been set is authentic and especially cut Broccoli, so-called after its designer, Broccoli Zabalgione, a celebrated Italian scholar and printer who planned his type especially for use on the more smoothly finished nutmeg paper that came into vogue late in the eighteenth century, the chief characteristics of his letters being the square serifs without fillet. Then there's Doubleday-Doran. When the office opens in the mornings, they make their force stand up and sing 'Rule Britannia.' If a war with England ever breaks out, they'll have to shut up shop as all their

authors who aren't serving the mother country and dropping bombs on Garden City will be interned. Simon and Schuster devote themselves to getting out outlines of philosophy and books on the art of thinking for cross-word puzzle fans. Scribners are hard put to it safeguarding their venerable dignity and getting the mazuma for detective novels at the same time and are trying to get away with it by making the detectives pause in the midst of scrutinizing the blood stains and learnedly discuss the influence of the unwritten Inca laws on the Libro de Tasas. Then there's Alf Harcourt. Every time Sinclair Lewis sneezes, Alf worries himself sick and calls up Dorothy Canfield to reassure himself that, anyway, she's feeling all right. Macmillan is very swell and won't have anything to do with an author unless he is at least sixty-five years old and the great-grandson (legitimate) of Button Gwinnett. Harpers, after a half-century or more of sweetness and light, are now kicking up their heels kittenishly like a dowager imitating Ann Pennington. Liveright doesn't care for any book that Lee Shubert can't see a subsequent wow in. McBride might just as well move his shop to Virginia; he's wasting time in New York when Cabell is living down there. Little, Brown constantly spend their money putting ads in the papers announcing that E. Phillips Oppenheim's latest, whatever it is, 'is Oppenheim

at his amusing best—and you know what that is!' As for Lippincott's, you've got to look up a ten-year-old telephone book to find their address, and as for Putnams, what with books about boy scouts in Africa and boy explorers at the North Pole, they seem to have gone over entirely to the children's trade. Duttons would like to have every book they publish dedicated by the author to Bishop Manning. Houghton-Mifflin don't care for any manuscript unless it is about Abraham Lincoln or Colonel House and can be brought out in two volumes each a foot thick, though once in a while they condescend to publish a little thing of a couple of thousand pages on some such subject as 'The Origin and Structure of the League of Nations.' And the Henry Holt and Century crowd are stirred out of their lethargy only when someone comes in with a text book on elementary chemistry or the flags of all nations that may sell big with the schools."

Horling looked around again to observe Lorinda, but she wasn't there. She had fallen into another hole.

## CHAPTER XVII

It was night-time June in Paris. On the hill above the starlit city, in that quiet little garden that hides itself from the Rue de Norvins, Lorinda and Horling were lounging over late dinner. There was something about this man, Lorinda told herself, that fascinated her. He talked too much, it was true, but she had become used to that with these literary gentlemen. And while she was aware of the dash of fraud of him, that very dash somehow added his romantic aspect, even as the insistent integrity of such as Morton and Norton, she reflected, detracted from theirs. Horling, whatever his shortcomings, was at least spectacular. He had an air, even though it was largely aqueous vapor. He was not the literary lover that Lorinda, had fortune smiled more sweetly upon her, would with a whole heart have elected—her mind dwelt still a little wistfully upon Varick and O'Hara—but he had none the less many attractions and, better yet, he was possible. She looked at him sitting opposite her in the broad wicker chair. She found him roughly good-looking in a mussed-up way. And the missing ear, she philosophized, gave him rather paradoxically that same

oddly satisfying look that the missing arms give the Venus de Milo and the missing head the Winged Victory. Nevertheless, she was grateful that it was only an ear.

She waited for him to say something. She didn't have long to wait.

"They say that the Americans have spoiled Paris," he began. "Rot! The Americans have made Paris! True enough, they've been helped out by the English and, even more so, by the Argentinians but, as I say, they've made it. You never hear a Frenchman say that Americans have ruined Paris; the complaint always comes from Americans themselves. The French know better. If anyone thinks that the Americans have ruined the place they should have seen it before the Americans came over in such large numbers. It wasn't one-third as attractive then as it is now! The Americans are responsible for the good hotels, three-quarters of the decent eating places, the excellent taxicab service, the improvement in French girls' looks and almost everything else in Paris. Before the Americans flocked here there was only one hotel in the whole city that had workable bathrooms, and it had only one for every thirty-five rooms. There were a few good restaurants —four, to be exact, in the entire city—and two of them were very dirty. Now there are a hundred, all of them clean as a pin. The French were satisfied

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actors, poets and Jews. An American is proudest of himself when he is not taken for an American, exactly as the others I've mentioned are proudest when they're complimented upon being not themselves. There is something about Americanism, away from its native soil, that the American doesn't relish in his heart and finds slightly objectionable. That's probably why, the moment he gets to London, the very least he does is to go out and buy things and dress himself up to look more or less like an Englishman, why in Berlin or in Munich he feels it is incumbent upon him to drink more beer than he actually wants to, and why in Paris he feels it his duty, however tired he is, to go out and chase the babies. He does all these things to divert attention from himself as an American. It isn't a case of doing in Rome what the Romans do nearly as much as it's a case of wishing to be thought a Roman. When he lands again at the foot of West Fifteenth Street, of course, he is vaingloriously as American as a Harlem dinge landing at Cherbourg is Arabian, but not when he is away from home. When he's away, if the fact that he is an American is somewhat unpleasantly brought up to him by a foreigner, he admits it, true enough, but much in the same defensive, condoning, challenging spirit of an actor, a poet or a Jew who is charged with being an actor, a poet or a Jew. 'Sure, I'm an American,' he says.

'So was George Washington!' 'Sure, I'm an actor,' says the actor. 'So was Shakespeare!' 'Sure, I'm a bum,' says the poet. 'So was Villon!' 'Sure, I'm a Jew,' says the Jew. 'So was Christ!' "

"Let's get the check and go somewhere else," said Lorinda.

So they found themselves, after a circular drive around the boulevards and through the Bois, at the Père Tranquille in the Rue Pierre-Lescot. An orchestra was playing jazz and half a dozen French couples were doing their utmost to dance and at the same time look at the only American couple on the floor to learn how it should be done.

"Do *you* dance?" Lorinda asked.

"I do not!" Horling answered, with what seemed to her a quite unnecessary degree of vehemence. "I certainly do not. Did you ever know a writer worth his salt who could dance? Imagine Ibsen dancing! Or Dreiser! Or Hendrik Van Loon!"

Lorinda promptly admitted that it was beyond her imagination.

"But," she said quietly and not without a soupçon of waggishness, "why shouldn't a writer dance? After all, the greatest ruler that Germany ever had loved to dance, and so did the greatest Kings of England, and so did the greatest President of the United States. On the other hand, Mr. Jannsen of the Hofbräuhaus, they tell me, doesn't dance, nor

does Sir Herbert Samuel, nor does Mr. Hoover. Just what is it, then, that makes dancing and literature so extremely incompatible and may I please have a lot of nice green Chartreuse?"

"You may," said Horling, "and it's a matter of artistic sensitiveness. The greatest ruler that Germany ever had may have been pretty good at hoofing, but his idea of poetry, as illustrated in his 'Palladium,' showed him to be about as artistically sensitive as a traveling salesman for Kotex. Your great English kings that were fancy boys with their feet were no better. Take the first George, for example. It was said of him that he always judged the fineness of a painting by its size and frame and that only the most trivial music had any appeal for him. I take it for granted that the greatest American President you refer to is Washington. I know that he was hot dog at the minuet, although we are told that he had feet as large as canal-boats, but what are we to say for the artistic sensitiveness of a man who once confessed that he had read only three of the classics and didn't care for them? Literary men, even when they aren't of the first or even second grade, are generally aesthetically sensitive fellows. Often, it's true, they posture a sensitiveness that really isn't in them but, posture or not, they are disturbed by what seems to them to be obvious and

idiotic grossness. Dancing impresses them in just that way.

"I suppose you'll say in reply to this that dancing is one of the arts. The idea is still mouthed chiefly by such persons as derive their theory of the arts from mythology and who haven't digested even mythology any too well. Terpsichore, the muse of dance, was the sponsor solely of choral dancing; the old girl would doubtless roll over in her mythological grave at the thought that she has come to be regarded as the sponsor of a couple of boobs wriggling their hips to a jazz band. Dancing an art? Blah! The merit of an authentic art surely can't be based on the looks of the artist, yet the merit of dancing certainly is to a great degree. It doesn't matter what Wagner looked like, or Rubens, or Ibsen—if it did, the Nibelungen-Ring, the 'Fall of the Damned' and 'Hedda Gabler' would have to be put down as tenth-rate stuff at best, but it matters everything what the creator of the so-called art of the dance looks like. It's Pavlova's and Mordkin's bodies much more than what they do with them that count, just as it was Isadora Duncan's before she got fat and gave up. Can you imagine the most proficient dancer in the world and at the same time a woman with legs like cider jugs and a face like a fried fish? What would you think of her 'art'? You'd laugh yourself to death, that's what you'd

do! Imagine an authentic art whose finest interpreters are forced to give it up and retire when their bodies cease to be attractive and when, at the very height of their proficiency, their faces get wrinkled. Why, even actors, those funnels of the hypothetical art of acting, don't have to do that!

"The idea that dancing is an art is just as big a delusion as the long-held facetious notion that the Vice-President of the United States takes his place as an obscurity with the husband of an actress or with an artist in the American Institute of Arts and Letters. Among the Vice-Presidents since the establishment of the nation we find John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Chester A. Arthur, Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge—all subsequently occupants of the Dais. Aaron Burr, General George Clinton, Elbridge Gerry, John C. Calhoun, John C. Breckinridge, James S. Sherman and Charles G. Dawes were others—none of them certainly suppressed violets. Daniel D. Tompkins, who served two terms and had been Governor of the State of New York for ten years, created a stir after his election by his vigorous fight for the abolition of slavery in New York. Senator Richard M. Johnson, true enough, didn't amount to much, nor did Senator William Rufus King, who had been minister to France. But George M. Dallas was a figure in

international diplomacy—he subsequently became the representative of the United States at the Court of St. James's, and Hannibal Hamlin, quondam Governor of Maine and a conspicuous Senator, loomed large in Congress, in State politics and subsequently in the diplomatic service. Schuyler Colfax, speaker of the House of Representatives from 1863 to 1869, when he was elected to the Vice-Presidency, at least was much heard of toward the conclusion of his term of office in connection with the Crédit Mobilier scandal. Henry Wilson was one of the organizers of the Republican party, was long a stormy petrel in politics as a leader of the Free Soil party, and came into fame as the author of the three-volume work, 'History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America,' to say nothing of such treatises as 'History of the Anti-Slavery Measures of the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Congresses' and 'History of the Reconstruction Measures of the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Congresses.' Such men as William Almon Wheeler, Thomas A. Hendricks and Garrett A. Hobart cut little ice, but Levi P. Morton made himself heard and felt in financial matters and Thomas R. Marshall at least kept himself in the public eye by a prolific discharge of very snappy nifties. If the Vice-Presidency has had its obscure Adlai E. Stevensons and Charles W. Fairbankses, let's not overlook the fact that the Presi-

dency has had its relatively no less obscure Polks and Pierces."

"Let's get the check and go somewhere else," said Lorinda.

"Where would you like to go?" asked Horling, beckoning the waiter.

"Let's get into a taxi and I'll tell you," she whispered.

They got into a taxi.

"Let's just drive around for a little while, first," she suggested.

"First?" inquired Horling.

"First," replied Lorinda.

"First what?" asked Horling.

"First," repeated Lorinda—sufficiently, she thought.

"I don't get you," said Horling, "but all right."

"Did you notice the good table manners of the Frenchmen in that place?" Horling began before Lorinda could open her mouth. "Well, I thoroughly believe that Americans are improving a lot in that direction, too. Perhaps in no other department of American life, in point of fact, is so great an improvement observable as in our national table manners. There was a time, and not so very long ago, when the manners at the average American food-trough were the despair at once of the relatively few local delicatos and of all foreign visitors, but

that era seems now to be definitely relegated to the past. It doesn't take an over-powerful memory to recall the day when the native board witnessed a series of gustatory phenomena more usually associated with Armenians and porkers and when an invitation to dinner promised all the aesthetic discomposures of an invitation to a museum of anatomical horrors. I don't allude to such platitudes as knife-swallowings, toothpickery, soup dissonances and the like, all too familiar to call for comment, but to the hundred and one other singularities that, in sum, made the American table the butt of all civilized nations.

"There was, for example, the well-known napkin-ring period, extending from approximately 1840 to 1900, during which it was the American custom to employ the napkin, after it had been rolled tightly into its circlet at the end of the meal, much after the manner of a shaving brush. The napkin would invariably be grasped by the lower end and the mouth and face flicked, dusted off and mopped with vigorous sweeping of the upper end, the displaced crumbs, dried egg and other facial débris being brought to fly gayly to right and left, most often either into the drinking glasses or coffee or into the eyes of the white-wings' *vis-à-vis*. During the meal itself, the aforesaid napkin—usually the size of a Düsseldorf bath-towel—was either

tucked under the collar or, in more modish households, under the top waistcoat button, or was tonily fastened across the bosom by a pair of small nickel or silver coat-lapel clips. The finger-bowl was still unheard of and in its stead the family used the water glasses, the hands being dried—though often, true enough, covertly—on the bottom of the table-cloth by way of keeping the napkin in the ring tidy. There were china crescent dishes in which the family deposited its elaborately sucked wish-bones and other fowl bones, to say nothing of such fish-bones as were dislodged from the roof of the mouth and the teeth with the thumb and forefinger; there were mounds of salt all over the table-cloth for use with radishes and celery—no one used plates for the purpose; there were moustache-cups, and small contrivances on the meat forks to keep the knives from sliding up abruptly and cutting off the eater's nose; there was oil-cloth necessarily under every table-cloth to keep the coffee-cup rings from soaking through and spoiling the table while saucers were being lapped of their contents.

"I name only a few of the eccentricities; others will immediately occur to any American over forty. Now they are no more. What has brought about the new and happier dispensation, I don't know. Maybe it's worldly experience that has come with the American's gradual increased prosperity and his

consequent tutelage in hotels, restaurants, Pullman cars and the like. Maybe the manifold books of etiquette have helped. Maybe it's the increase in travel, with its attendant instruction and sophistication. Whatever it is, the fact remains that the national table manners have so improved that today they are at least the equal, in gentility and *bienséance*, of those of the average New York Alsatian waiter."

Lorinda was at her wits' end.

"Please," she implored, "*please!*"

"Please what?" Horling wanted to know.

"Please don't! There's something *I* want to say."

"Forgive me. It didn't occur to me," said Horling blandly. "What is it?"

"Will you come to my room tonight? I'll tell it to you there."

"Your *room?*" Horling stammered, flabbergasted. "Why—uh—why—uh—yes—yes, of course, if you wish."

He was too dumfounded, during the rest of the ride to their hotel, even to give her any more of his opinions of Americans.

* * * * *

In Lorinda's room, half an hour later, Horling heard what it was she had to tell him. She told him sweetly, and very charmingly, but none the less di-

rectly. Horling, staggered, asked her to repeat it. She repeated it. His face went white, then crimson, then white again.

"Do you mean it?" he blurted out.

"Yes," she said, simply.

"But—" he began.

But. *But*! That word again! Lorinda, a tear in her lovely eye, clenched her teeth.

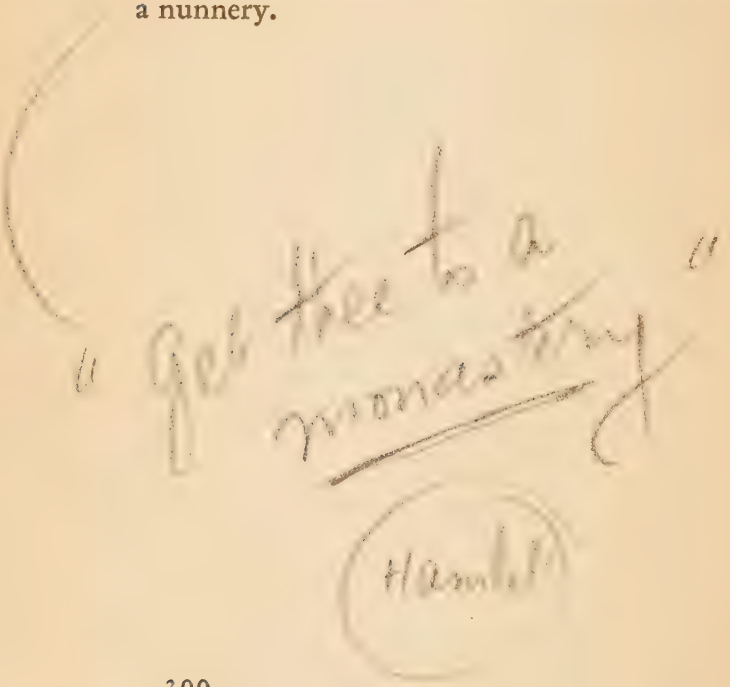
"But what?" she sniffled.

"I can't," he said. "I can't be to you what you wish me to be."

And he took her hand in his and, sitting crushed beside her, told her his sad story. It seemed that when that can of gelatine film had exploded in Belleau Wood, during his valiant service in the cause of Truth and Righteousness, the explosion had exploded in turn a second and even larger can—the American Expeditionary Forces were not to be caught short of ammunition against the Hun, thanks to the foresight of Mr. Newton D. Baker, the great Secretary of War—and that an ear had been the least, or rather the lesser, of his losses.

## CHAPTER XVIII

LORINDA never again returned to America. To this day, her friends have never been able to understand what it was that strangely impelled her, so full of life and youth and living and so avid of forbidden adventure, to enter and seek the solace of a nunnery.



*This book*
*is set in Garamond, a*
*modern rendering of the type*
*first cut in the sixteenth century by*
*Claude Garamont (1510-1561). He was a*
*pupil of Geofroy Tory and is believed to have*
*based his letters on the Venetian models, although he*
*introduced a number of important differences, and it is*
*to him that we owe the letter which we know as Old*
*Style. He gave to his letters a certain elegance and a*
*feeling of movement which won for their creator an*
*immediate reputation and the patronage of the French*
*King, Francis I.*

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